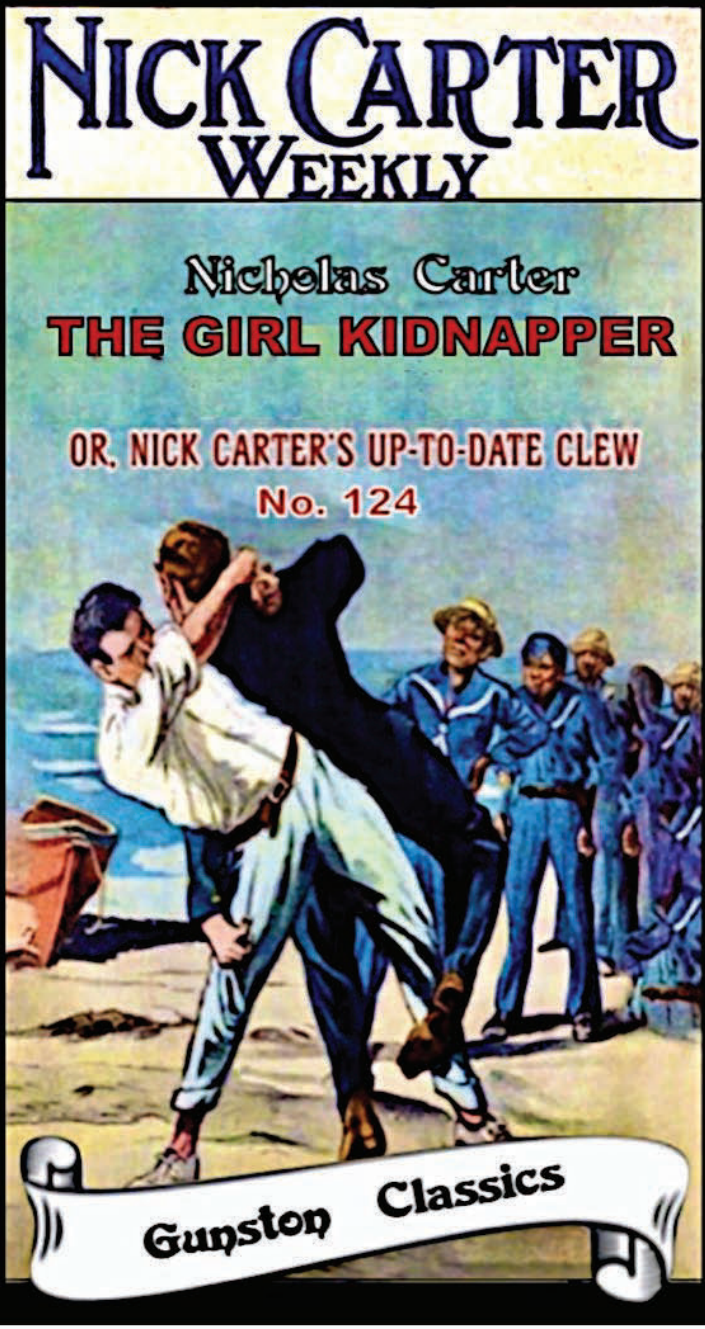

NICK CARTER
WEEKLY
Nicholas Carter
THE GIRL KIDNAPPER
OR, NICK CARTER'S UP-TO-DATE CLEW
No. 124
Gunston Classics

N0. 124

THE GIRL KIDNAPPER

NICHOLAS CARTER

1915

Lyons Head Publishing

Gunston Classics
&
Lyons Head Publishing

© Copyright 2023

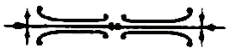
All rights reserved.
No part of this book may be
reproduced in any form or by
any electronic or mechanical means without
written permission of the author and publisher.
All text, illustrations and design, as presented, are
the exclusive property of

Gunston Classics
PO BOX 5905
Baltimore, MD 21282

CONTENT

I.	Through Locked Doors	4
II.	Bits of Evidence	12
III.	Long Distance Observations	25
IV.	A Dinner With Nick Carter	32
V.	An Experiment In Chemistry	42
VI.	With the Aid of Her Men	51
VII.	Nick Lies In Wait	64
VIII.	Nick Deal With the Odds	73
IX.	One Against Seven is Nine	83
X.	Quiet Preparations	91
XI.	Under Hatches	101
XII.	The Infernal Machine	109

Detective - Nick Carter



THE GIRL KIDNAPPER

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH LOCKED DOORS.

"The thing seems impossible!"

"Yet it's true."

"You mean to tell me that——"

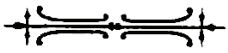
"I mean to tell you that Mrs. de Puyster van Dietrich, who retired to her room in this hotel last night at eleven o'clock, was not there this morning when her maid went to call her, and that her doors were all bolted and locked, with the keys inside."

"What about the windows?"

"Mrs. van Dietrich's rooms are on the fourth floor."

"Well?"

"She did not jump out, Mallory, if that's what you mean. They overlook the sea, and there are jagged rocks immediately beneath her windows. She would surely have been killed if she had gone that way. Anyhow, she is a well-balanced



woman, who enjoys life, and a multimillionaire. Why should she commit suicide?"

"I don't know why she should, Savage. That's nothing. Seventy-five out of a hundred suicides seem to have no good reason behind them—until investigation is made afterward."

"She did not jump out of the window, I tell you."

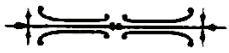
"Perhaps she fell out," suggested Mallory, sticking to his guns.

"She neither jumped nor fell out," snapped the other. "The rocks would tell the story if she had."

James Mallory and Paul Savage, proprietors of the new summer hotel, the Amsterdam—situated on a picturesque promontory on the Delaware coast, with the broad Atlantic stretching away from its very foundation walls—faced each other blankly in their private office.

It was well on in the morning, and two weeks after the opening of the hotel, and judicious advertising had resulted in the house being comfortably full already. The rooms—some single, but mostly en suite—had been engaged largely in advance, and the guests were practically all of the well-to-do class, with a fair sprinkling of very wealthy.

Mrs. de Puyster van Dietrich was not the only multimillionaire, for there were several others.



Mallory was a stout, imposing-looking man, always immaculately attired, and with a suave manner that had perhaps led in the first place to his becoming a “promoter.” Assuredly it had helped him when fairly launched in that interesting occupation. His very appearance was a guarantee that the company he represented was sound and certain to pay healthy dividends to the stockholders.

Paul Savage, his partner, was a cadaverous individual, with many lines about his lank jaw and the hunted look in his deep-set eyes which one often sees in the hard-working business man, whose talent is mainly for detail.

The two men had been associated in various schemes for years. Some of them had turned out well, while others had not. Now they had plunged on this hotel scheme, got a company behind them, and were hoping that, when the time came for them to “unload,” they would find themselves with enough money to rest on their oars while selecting some new enterprise, which would promise even better than this.

On this morning, Mallory had been sitting behind his desk, swelling with satisfaction as he figured on the profits that would result from the guests who already were in the house, if they stayed a week or two longer, without counting others that might come.

He had just been reading a letter he had received a week ago from a certain Baroness Latour, who had engaged a suite of rooms, insisting that they must look out over the sea. The

price was not so much an object, as her having pleasant rooms, with a clear ocean view.

“Well,” Mallory had muttered, “the baroness has rooms right over the cliff. That ought to suit her. I hope she slept well last night. There is a clear drop from her window of forty-five feet to the water, at least. The waves wash against the wall of the house on that side.”

He had got to this stage of his musings when Paul Savage burst in with the news that Mrs. van Dietrich had disappeared in so inexplicable a way from her apartments.

How a rather large lady, of dignified aspect and deliberate movement, could have been spirited from her bed and carried out of the house, without anybody being aware of it, was something that neither of the partners could comprehend.

“If her doors had been unfastened,” grunted Savage, “there might have been some explanation. But all of them are locked and bolted within.”

“She’d gone to bed, you say?”

“So her maid says. But she had dressed herself before she went away.”

“That shows she wasn’t kidnaped,” remarked Mallory.

“It doesn’t show anything,” rejoined Savage. “How do you account for the doors being fastened inside, with the keys left in the locks in the rooms? You don’t suppose a lady leaving

her rooms would have somebody inside to bolt and lock the doors and then get out of the window in a flying machine, do you?"

"Where is the maid?" asked Mallory.

"In hysterics in the housekeeper's room," was the disgusted reply. "She and the housekeeper got in with the housekeeper's master key, and after one look at Mrs. van Dietrich's bed, the girl darted at her employer's trunks, of which she had the keys, and searched through them. All the jewelry was gone."

"H'm! Perhaps the maid——"

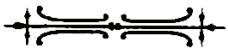
"She had never left her own room from the time she went there, after putting her mistress to bed, until she went to call Mrs. van Dietrich this morning. We have the testimony of the maid who shares the room with her for that. This maid was awake with the toothache, practically all night, and she knows the other one never left the room."

"Have you done anything about it?" asked Mallory.

"Yes," was the reply. "I heard about this thing two hours ago."

"You did? Why didn't you tell me?"

"What would have been the use? I thought I might find out, by quiet investigation, before I came to you. Only the housekeeper and the maid, Mary Cook, know Mrs. van Dietrich is gone. After ten minutes' inquiry and examination,



I decided it was too much for us alone, and I wired to New York for Nicholas Carter."

"The big detective, eh? That was a good move, Paul. I only hope he'll come. What did you say in the message?"

"Told him an important case was here for him, and that we would pay any fee. He could name his own figure. But it was urgent, and would he come at once?"

"Two hours since you sent that to him in New York?"

"A little more than two hours. But I've had no answer. If he'd start at once, he could be here by evening."

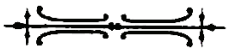
"Perhaps he isn't at home."

"That's what I'm afraid of. He's the only man I can think of who would be likely to make anything of this. It's too much for the average policeman. Indeed——"

A rap at the door of the office made Paul Savage step to the door with an irritable wrinkling upon his lean face of a score of lines which had not been there before, while James Mallory growled from behind his desk.

"Oh, Colonel Pearson?" ejaculated Savage, with forced toleration, as he found himself face to face with one of the house's guests. "Is there anything——"

Colonel Pearson was a cleanly built, soldierly looking man, with broad shoulders and a remarkably keen face. The dark



eyes had a way of looking through anybody on whom they rested. At least, that was the conclusion to which Paul Savage had come. He was in summer attire, and had the calm insouciance of the wealthy man of leisure.

“I have received a telegram,” remarked the colonel, holding up a crumpled yellow paper. “It has only just got to me. I came at once to see what it was all about.”

“Telegram? I have only sent one since I have been here, and that was to a person in New York.”

The colonel smiled.

“Exactly. You sent it to a person who was supposed to be in New York. But it happens that he was much nearer.”

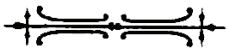
“I don’t understand,” faltered Savage.

“I don’t, either,” added Mallory, who had been sitting behind his desk, listening in bewilderment. “Do you know anything about that person, Colonel Pearson?”

“If you will permit me to close the door,” was the response, “I will tell you.”

He shut the door and slipped the bolt into place. Then, as he approached the desk to which Paul Savage had retreated, as if seeking the moral support of his partner, he said quietly:

“You telegraphed Nicholas Carter, at his home in Madison Avenue, New York, to come here quickly, on an important



case. That is how this telegram reads," he adds, as he smoothed out the yellow paper and looked at it. "I have only to say that, though I chose to be known here as Colonel Pearson, since I came to enjoy a short vacation, my real name is Nicholas Carter, and I live in Madison Avenue, New York."

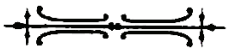
"You Nicholas Carter?" gasped Savage. "Why, I thought Carter was an altogether different sort of man."

"I understand," laughed Nick. "You did not bargain for my being here, in light clothes and white canvas shoes, with a golf club in my hand. It did not occur to you that I might be an everyday man. You thought that, as a detective, I should wear a lowering look and salute you with a mysterious 'Hist!' when you opened the door just now."

"Not exactly, but——"

"Yet a detective must be allowed his play time, like any other man," continued Nick. "I have just been playing golf with the Baroness Latour. She is an early riser, as I am, and when I chanced to meet her on the links, we agreed to play together, instead of singly. So we have done nine holes. It was a drawn game. Here is your telegram. It was redirected to me, in my assumed name of Colonel Pearson, to this hotel, as you see, by my assistant."

Paul Savage continued to look steadily at the calm face of the detective, as if not quite satisfied. But Mallory broke in, with an impatient grunt:



“Of course, you have no idea what induced us to send for you, Mr. Carter?”

“It has to do with the disappearance of Mrs. de Puyster van Dietrich, has it not?”

“Why, how did you know?” demanded Savage. “Not a word has been said about it outside of this office and the housekeeper’s room. We have been very careful to keep any inkling of the affair from our guests.”

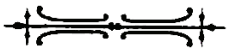
The detective glanced at him quickly, and there was a narrowing of the dark eyes which told of swift thinking.

“Indeed? Are you sure nothing has got out about it?” he asked.

“Quite. There are four persons who know about Mrs. van Dietrich’s disappearance: My partner, Mr. Mallory, the housekeeper, and Mrs. van Dietrich’s maid. That is all. Well, there is one more—yourself, of course. We did not know that you had found it out. We don’t understand how you did it, either.”

“Well, I prefer not to tell you that just now,” answered Nick Carter. “That is, if you desire me to take this case.”

“We most certainly do,” declared Paul Savage earnestly.



CHAPTER II.

BITS OF EVIDENCE.

"Sit down, won't you, Mr. Carter?"

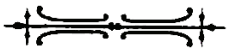
James Mallory, who had been so interested in gazing at the great detective as to forget the ordinary amenities, offered this invitation. Getting up from his own chair behind the flat-topped desk, he placed one for the visitor, with a propitiatory smile.

"Now, what is the first move, Mr. Carter?" asked Paul Savage, as they settled down.

"Let me go over the particulars, as they have come to me," replied Nick. "We will see if they agree with the information you have."

"Good idea!" commended Mallory.

"To begin with, Mrs. van Dietrich was put to bed by her maid, Mary Cook, about eleven o'clock last night. The maid sleeps on the sixth floor, at the top of the house. Mrs. van Dietrich's three rooms and bath are on the fourth."



“That’s correct,” nodded Savage.

“At eight o’clock this morning, Mary Cook went to awaken her employer, according to her custom. She could not make the lady hear, and she got scared. So she went to the housekeeper, Mrs. Joyce, and told her she was afraid Mrs. van Dietrich was sick. Mrs. Joyce went with her, and, with her master key, unlocked the door, and, also, with another key, shot back the bolt.”

“That’s the way I got it,” breathed Paul Savage. “Though how you managed to get it so exact——”

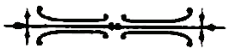
“When the two women went into the room, they found the bed had been slept in, and Mrs. van Dietrich’s nightgown had been thrown carelessly across it. The windows were closed, except for a few inches at the top, for ventilation. This was the case in all three rooms, and the ventilator in the bathroom was open, as usual.”

“There were no signs of a struggle,” remarked Savage.

“So I understand,” assented Nick. “Another thing is that the clothes which Mrs. van Dietrich wore the day before went with her. She must have dressed herself—or been dressed by somebody else—before going away.”

“That is all true, as I got it,” observed Paul Savage. “But there is another point, which you have not mentioned.”

“And that is——”



“All the jewelry in her trunks was taken out, although the trunks were locked when the maid examined them this morning. The girl had the keys.”

“Oh, she had?”

The intonation with which the detective made this remark caused Savage to shake his head decidedly.

“I understand,” went on Nick. “You mean there is no suspicion attaching to the maid? Well, I am of the same opinion. You have not been able to find the slightest clew, have you?”

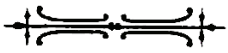
“None.”

“Have any of the guests left the hotel this morning? I mean, left altogether?”

“No. All of them will stay with us for several days, at least, so I expect. They are here to enjoy the quietude and beauty of the place. They are not transients, such as you find in city hotels.”

“None of them have given notice to leave, have they?” continued Nick, disregarding the encomium on the hotel and its surroundings.

“I don’t think so. Are there any, Mallory?” asked Savage, turning to his partner.



“I haven’t heard of any. I’ll ask the clerk, if you like. The phone is right here,” replied Mallory, laying a hand upon his desk telephone.

“That is not necessary,” declared the detective. “I have already asked him. I came through the office to this room, and I picked up what information I could on the way.”

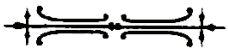
“You’re a pretty good picker, too, I should say,” remarked Mallory, with a grin. “You seem to know about all we have found out.”

“If any of the guests say they are going to leave, I wish you’d let me know at once,” requested Nick, as he got up from his chair. “I’ll go and send a telegram to New York. Then I should like to look at Mrs. van Dietrich’s rooms. They haven’t been disturbed, I hope.”

“No. I gave orders that no one should go into them after the maid had looked at the trunks. Mrs. Joyce has her own keys, and she has fastened all the doors as they were before, except that she had to knock out one of the keys that had been left in the bedroom door, so that she could put in her own.”

“That’s good. I’ll send a message by telephone to the telegraph office at Dorset, from one of the booths in the lobby. I’ll be right back.”

The detective telephoned the message, as he had said, directed to his assistant Chick, in Madison Avenue, New York. He told Chick to come down to the Hotel Amsterdam at



once, and to bring the bloodhound, Captain—which had done so much effective police work for them at various times—with him.

Nick Carter knew perfectly well that Mallory, or Savage, had taken the receiver off the hook in their office, and were listening to him over the wire.

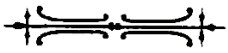
That did not disturb him. He had rather expected it, and his object in telegraphing from the booth, instead of from their office, as he might have done, was to satisfy himself that they would descend to the meanness of "listening in" to a private message.

He strolled back to their office when he had dispatched his telegram, and when the door was opened, stood on the threshold with a smile as he told them he was ready to go to the room of the vanished Mrs. van Dietrich.

"One moment," he added, as they were about to come forth. "I should like to say something to you with the door closed."

He stepped into the office, closing the door behind him, and said, in an earnest whisper:

"Let me impress one thing upon you, gentlemen. I understand that you are anxious to keep any knowledge of this strange disappearance from your patrons, and also that you would not like it in the newspapers?"



“The newspapers?” fairly shrieked James Mallory. “That would settle us. I believe if I saw a reporter around this hotel, I would fling him out of the window into the sea. And, of course, we must not let our guests know. It would give the hotel a fearful black eye—although it is no fault of ours.”

“Very well,” observed Nick. “Then be careful that no one suspects my identity. I am Colonel Pearson, remember. If any one outside of yourselves were to know who I am, there would be no use my going on with the case.”

“You can depend on us keeping it a secret,” asserted Savage promptly. “We are too anxious for you to solve the mystery to throw any obstacles in your way.”

“That’s what!” added Mallory. “What do you think of it all?”

“We have seen the effect,” returned Nick, “and we know that it must have a cause.”

“That’s all right. But what is the cause?” growled Savage.

“The cause is never less than the effect,” continued the detective. “Therefore, arguing by the importance of the effect, we must look for a fairly powerful cause. Now, let’s go up to the fourth floor.”

The elevator man evidently had not heard of anything unusual in the hotel, for he merely glanced at the two partners and the gentleman he had come to know as Colonel Pearson, and

when he was told to let them off at the fourth floor, he did so without emotion.

“That’s good,” remarked Nick, as they walked along the thickly carpeted corridor. “I can see that the incident concerning Mrs. van D. has not become common property. Is this the door?”

Savage nodded and opened a door with his master key, ushered them into a sitting room, and closed the door behind them.

Nick Carter walked on to the bedroom, and after a cursory glance at the bed, went to the window.

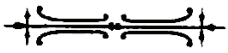
Drawing from his pocket a powerful magnifying glass, he proceeded to examine every inch of the window sill, working in a series of imaginary squares.

The two partners watched him curiously, but he took no notice of them. When he had finished his minute inspection of the sill and frame, he threw up the window and leaned out.

“You have made careful examination of the rocks under this window, I presume?” he asked.

“Yes. We have gone over them thoroughly,” replied Savage. “There is nothing there.”

“Ah! Whose rooms are those that overlook the water on this same floor? I see there is no shore or rocks at all there. The house seems to have been built straight out of the sea.”



James Mallory walked to the window and looked out. He shook his head.

"Come over here, Savage," he said. "I don't know what rooms they are. You know, don't you?"

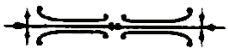
"Yes," answered his partner, putting out his head and looking along the rows of windows. "That window, where the curtain is blowing out, and the next one, are number forty-eight. A lady occupies the suite. Let me see! Oh, yes! the Baroness Latour."

"Indeed?" remarked Nick Carter carelessly. "She's a very charming young lady. We were playing golf together this morning, as I told you. Now, let me have a look at this room door."

Turning the key, he swung the door open a few inches.

"You'd better stand outside, Mr. Mallory," he suggested. "If anybody comes along and seems curious, you can say that I am repairing the lock. Tell them that Colonel Pearson makes a hobby of this sort of thing. I'll keep out of sight as much as possible, however."

Nick pushed the door nearly shut, and kneeling inside the room, he drew out the key and inspected it closely through his magnifying glass. Then he examined the bolt and keyhole, and kept at it for ten minutes.



“Come in, Mr. Mallory,” he requested, through the narrow opening between the door and the jamb. “I’m through with the door for the present.”

To the surprise of both partners, he dropped to his knees, and, with the aid of his glass, began to go over the carpet in a series of imaginary squares, just as he had done at the window.

It was half an hour before he had finished this task. By that time he was under an electric light which hung near the bed, for the convenience of guests who might like to read after retiring.

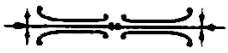
A gas jet protruded from the wall near it. Here Nick picked up the burned end of a wax match.

He seemed to attach some importance to this trifle, for he arose to his feet with the fragment of match in his hand and asked the partners:

“What kind of matches do you provide in this hotel?”

“Why—er—just the ordinary wood safety matches, with the name of the hotel on the box. They are put in every room, for the use of smokers, and also to light the gas when a guest does not want to use the electric light. Some people like a lowered gas jet in the room all night, you know.”

“Do you use wax matches at all?”



Mallory shook his head and turned to Savage, who, as already remarked, was the detail man of the concern.

“Have we any of those matches, Savage?”

“None in the house, that I know of,” was the short reply. “Have you found out anything, Mr. Carter?”

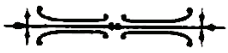
“Nothing that I can report, Mr. Savage,” Nick answered. “It is too early to say one thing or another yet. I will say, however, that, in my opinion, the person responsible for the vanishing of Mrs. van Dietrich is living in the hotel.”

“A servant?” asked Mallory anxiously.

“That remains to be seen,” returned the detective, with a shrug. “It is also certain that there are accomplices on the outside. I will go to my room and think things over. After luncheon I will go into the case further. If anything comes to your knowledge that seems likely to be useful, you will find me in my room. Keep up your nerve, gentlemen, and, above all things, keep your own counsel. Strict secrecy, remember.”

Once in his own room, Nick Carter lighted one of his favorite perfectos, of which he had brought a box with him, and settled down to think over the mystery that had so unexpectedly faced him in a place where he might have supposed he could rest and enjoy a vacation in peace.

He smoked in silence for an hour, with the key of Mrs. van Dietrich’s bedroom and the half-burned wax match in his



fingers. He examined them alternately through the magnifying glass and tried to build a hypothesis on either one or the other, or both.

Suddenly there was a sharp rap at his door. As he opened it, James Mallory stepped inside and stared at him with blinking eyes, while his heavy cheeks, usually beet red, were a yellowish white.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Nick Carter sharply.

“More trouble!” blurted out Mallory. “It seems as if the foul fiend himself is taking a hand in running this hotel.”

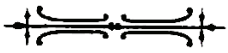
“Never mind about that!” interrupted the detective impatiently. “What is the specific trouble now?”

“Another of our guests has mysteriously disappeared,” wailed Mallory. “Mr. Harvey L. Drago, the big Wall Street banker.”

“Disappeared?” cried Nick Carter. “How? From his bedroom?”

“No. From the golf links!”

“That so? This is getting interesting,” observed Nick. “Sit down and tell me all about it, Mr. Mallory.”



CHAPTER III.

LONG-DISTANCE OBSERVATIONS.

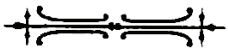
Accepting the cigar that Nick Carter offered by pushing the box toward him on the table, James Mallory bit off the end in a distracted way, but did not light it. Instead, he used the unlighted cigar to emphasize the points of his narration by waving it about as he talked.

"Mr. Drago is one of the most influential men we have," he began. "He is very wealthy, and he is a free spender. Then he is not old, and he is the sort of man who starts things in a social way and keeps them going afterward. You know how I mean, Mr. Carter?"

"Yes. Go on."

"He went out to the golf links early this morning, saying he would be back for luncheon about twelve. He did not come, and we sent a boy over to the links to see why. The caddie says Mr. Drago left the links about eleven. He was going to walk back to the hotel by way of the beach. That is two hours ago. We can't find the slightest trace of him."

"Strange!" murmured Nick.



“It will be ruin for us, Mr. Carter,” declared Mallory. “Can’t you do something?”

“You have told me all you know? Isn’t there anything else you’ve discovered which might serve as a clew?”

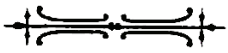
“Not a thing. Mr. Drago walked through the lobby this morning, pleasant, as usual. He spoke to two or three people as he went along. I was one of them, as a matter of fact. He seemed to be in good spirits, and he said he intended to play the whole eighteen holes.”

“And that’s the last you saw of him? Was any one else playing this morning?”

“Several. They saw him make the whole round, and the caddie says he was in good form, and played a fine game. I don’t know what his score was, exactly. I believe the caddie said he did it in——”

“Never mind about that,” laughed Nick. “That wouldn’t help me to trace him. What I want to get at is how he came to be kidnaped in broad daylight. This is as queer as the Mrs. van Dietrich case. I’ll go down to lunch, and take up the whole matter afterward.”

He slipped a pair of powerful field glasses into a pocket, and went down with Mallory.



Paul Savage was at the foot of the elevator, but the detective put him off as he was beginning to whisper a long story of woe into his ears, by telling him that he knew all about it.

"I'll tell you when I learn something," he added, turning away to enter the ornate restaurant.

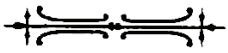
His luncheon over—and the detective disposed of a good one, as a matter of principle—Nick strode out to the golf links and got hold of the caddie who had been with Drago.

The links were a mile from the hotel.

Nothing more was to be learned from the caddie than the detective already knew. So he took a pathway which ran through a wood, coming out on the sandy beach, edged by rocks.

Coming to a bit of rising ground, Nick stood there and surveyed the prospect. He was thinking all the time. Much as he admired beautiful scenery for its own sake, he would not have stopped now to look around had he not had some ulterior object.

The really fine links stretched behind him, the clubhouse showing above trees in the distance. On the right were the woods, with the hotel towering on the edge of the cliff, three-quarters of a mile away. To the left were other woods, and in front rolled the blue waters, with the white-capped surf, of the Atlantic Ocean.



In the great curving bay, immediately in front of the hotel, but some distance out, was a steam yacht, her white hull and plentiful brasswork gleaming in the bright sunshine.

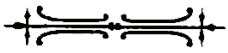
Nick Carter stood in deep thought for several minutes. After discarding the possibility of Drago having been spirited away in a motor car, for the simple reason that the only approach to the sea path, which the missing man had taken, was by way of the links, where a machine must have been seen, the detective sought another explanation.

“There are two ways in which it might be done,” he mused. “A man might be waylaid in the shelter of the woods and carried through them to the main road. Another way—and perhaps the most likely—would be by the sea. You can’t see the beach from here on account of the rocks. A boat could sneak up and get away without being seen by any one on shore.”

It seemed to Nick that either of these two methods must have been employed, and he was trying to settle in his own mind which one was the more likely, when his gaze fell upon the yacht out in the bay.

He had noticed it many times before. But now it took on a new significance in the light of the theory he had formed with regard to Harvey L. Drago’s disappearance.

“What’s that yacht doing out there?” he muttered. “Who is her owner? Any one living in the hotel? That seems likely, although she was there when I came here, day before



yesterday. I don't remember to have seen any communication with her from the shore. She may only have put in there for shelter, or repairs."

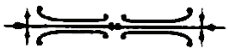
The detective was a yachtsman himself, and took a deep interest in all kinds of craft. Dropping behind a bush and lying almost at full length, he trained his field glasses on the yacht.

With the eye of a sailor, as well as of a keen investigator, he studied the graceful vessel thoroughly from bow to stern, and from water line to the tops of tapering masts and white smokestack.

"She looks familiar to me in a general way," he reflected. "There is something about her general lines that I seem to recognize. But I can't identify her as any boat I know. I'll ask at the hotel. Somebody there may know something about her. Of course, it is not remarkable for a pleasure boat to be anchored in a beautiful bay like this. Still, no harm will be done by my asking."

He got up and climbed slowly to the little eminence whereon he had stood before, as a new idea came to him. Having reached the top of the small, spreading hill, he dropped flat upon the ground, the field glasses in his fingers.

"If I am not mistaken," was his inward remark, "I can see the hotel well from here with the glasses. I'll take a squint at that little cove under the windows of the room occupied by the baroness. From here it looks as if they must be nearly in line



with the yacht. That may not mean anything—but then, again, it may."

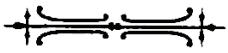
Nick Carter swept the glasses over the cove. Then he gradually brought them to bear on the windows of the rooms occupied by Mrs. de Puyster van Dietrich until she departed into the unknown so strangely.

He allowed his glasses to wander from room to room and from floor to floor, until they finally came to rest on the window of the sitting room belonging to the dashing young lady with whom he had played golf that morning—the Baroness Latour.

Nothing at this window interested him, and he was just about to return to his scrutiny of the cove, when he saw a woman come forward in the room and throw up the sash. It was the baroness.

"I don't blame her for opening her window on such a beautiful afternoon," thought Carter. "The peculiar thing is that she should have had it closed at all. Hello! What's she doing now?"

Baroness Latour—looking more charming than ever, Nick thought, in her afternoon gown—had disappeared from the window. Now she returned with a peculiar-looking box in her hands.



She settled it firmly on the window sill, and as she did so, the puzzled frown that had wrinkled up the forehead of the detective passed away. He saw what the box really was.

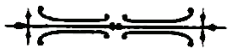
"Great Scott!" came from his lips, in an excited whisper. "What does the Baroness Latour want with a wireless telephone? Who is she talking to? The only thing I can see in line with her is the yacht. Is it possible that she is having a conversation with somebody on board? If so, why? That's the question—why?"

He settled himself to gaze through his glasses more at his ease, as well as to make sure he was right as to the nature of the box on the baroness' window sill.

"It strikes me, my charming friend, that you may be here for some other purpose than to play golf and take part in the evening 'hops' in the hotel. Your actions at the window are unusual enough to make me curious, at all events. I'll telegraph to New York for my own wireless telephone. Signor Marconi may be just as useful to me as to you, with this new and wonderful invention of his. Meanwhile, since we have already made acquaintance with each other, I shall venture to ask you to dine with me this evening. If you decline—well, I must hit on something else."

The baroness removed the machine from her window at this instant, and pulled down the sash.

Nick Carter got to his feet, and strolled thoughtfully back to the hotel.



CHAPTER IV

A DINNER WITH NICK CARTER

The Baroness Latour sat at a little writing table behind the lace curtains in her sitting room, making notes in a dainty memorandum book. Occasionally she peered through the fine web of the curtain at the handsome white yacht gently rising and falling on the swell in the bay.

A knock at the door, and her maid took a note from a bell boy and handed it to the baroness.

"The boy is waiting for an answer," said the maid.

"Very well, Florine. I'll see what it is."

The baroness started with uncontrollable astonishment when she found that the letter was a respectful request from Colonel Pearson that she would give him the pleasure of dining at his table that evening.

"Well, who would have thought this?" she murmured. "Colonel Pearson, eh? Indeed, I'll dine with him."

She wrote a note of acceptance in a firm, but entirely feminine hand, and sealed the envelope with golden wax, stamped with a large "L."

"I rather think that 'L' is convincing," she said to herself, with a smile, as she handed the letter to Florine, to give to the waiting bell boy.

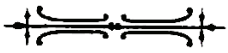
"Keep the doors closed, Florine," she ordered. "You can stay in the room. Give me that telephone instrument."

With Florine's assistance, she placed the wireless-telephone apparatus again on the sill, and, after a few moments of ineffective endeavor, got a ticking that told her she was in communication with the yacht which had awakened so much curiosity in Nick Carter.

Her conversation was very brief, but she contrived to give orders in a few words, which, under certain conditions, would carry out some very important work.

"There, Mr. Nicholas Carter!" she murmured, as she motioned to Florine to help her in removing the apparatus from the window. "I don't know how you have grown suspicious. But I can't explain your invitation on any other supposition. If you are not suspicious, nothing will happen. If you are—well, we shall see."

Among the well-dressed women who dined in the brilliantly lighted restaurant of the Hotel Amsterdam that evening, there



was none more strikingly beautiful or aristocratic than the Baroness Latour.

Her costume was the last word in fashion and costly material, and she wore it like a queen. Her jewelry was dazzling.

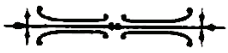
Sitting opposite, at the small table set for two, was Nick Carter. His strong, grave face, lighted up by those wonderful dark eyes of his, made him, in his correct evening dress, an effective foil to the radiant beauty of the fair young woman who was his guest.

As a thorough man of the world, Nick Carter knew how to order a dinner, and the waiter looked at him in profound respect when he had the list of dishes on his slip.

It will have been gathered that the Baroness Latour was not exactly what she appeared to be. In fact, she had considered it necessary to change her personal aspect long before she came to the Amsterdam and found that Nick Carter, under the name and title of Colonel Pearson, was a guest.

The name she had assumed was not that by which the detective had known her a year or so before.

For weeks she had been slowly and systematically disguising herself, and she had done it more effectively than would be thought possible by a person who did not appreciate what can be done with cosmetics, instruments, and lotions in these days.



A “beauty doctor” would have gone into transports over her artistic achievements in this way.

Paraffin injections had changed the contour of her whole face, and the shape of her hands had been modified by the same means. Her heavy coils of bronze hair had become dark brown, and she had even practiced speaking in a different cadence, to hide her ordinary tones.

The perfection of the disguise can be understood when it is said that Nick Carter had known the baroness very well under a different name, and would have recognized her instantly had not her real personality been absolutely concealed.

He had learned from Mallory that the baroness had engaged her rooms by telegraph from New Orleans, and that she had particularly stipulated that they should overlook the ocean.

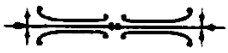
Why had she been so insistent on this, and what had she been doing with that wireless telephone on the window sill?

The dinner over, Nick asked if she would accept a cigarette, at the same time offering his cigarette case.

“Thank you,” she replied sweetly. “I will smoke, but I prefer my own cigarettes, if you will permit me.”

Nick bowed, and drawing forth a cigarette for himself, looked for a match.

“Confound that waiter!” he exclaimed. “There are no matches on the table, and I don’t believe I have one in my pocket.”



“I have some,” smiled the baroness, who had been taking a costly, gold-tipped Turkish cigarette from a gold case. “Here!”

She took from her chatelaine a small gold match box—a companion piece to the cigarette case—and pressing open the cover, offered it to the detective.

He saw, as he took one of the wax matches in his fingers, that it was an exact duplicate of the burned match he had picked up in the bedroom of Mrs. de Puyster van Dietrich that morning.

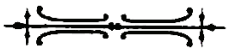
Wax matches generally are more or less alike, but these were much thicker than most of them.

He was obliged to drop his eyes to veil the gleam of excitement in them. Then, coolly striking the match, he held it until the baroness’ cigarette was going.

When he lighted his own, he blew out the match and dropped it carelessly to the floor at his feet.

“May I take a match or two from your box, in case of emergency, until I get some,” he asked, smiling. Then, as she nodded assent, he continued: “When am I to have the pleasure of another round with you on the links?”

The baroness laughed gleefully, and she answered his questions by asking another:



“Do you do everything as seriously as you play golf, Colonel Pearson?”

“I suppose so,” smiled Nick. “It always seems to me that anything worth doing at all should be taken up earnestly.”

“I believe that, too,” she returned, still laughing. “I was only thinking that it was not unusual for you to find yourself pitted against women. Judging by the way you played this morning, I should say you respect the prowess of my sex, no matter how poorly they may play.”

“You are right, baroness,” admitted the detective. “I have played the game very often against women.”

“And do you always win?”

“Is that a fair question?”

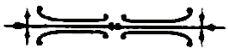
“I was curious to know.”

“I did not win this morning.”

“But you didn’t lose,” she rejoined quickly. “So there is neither decided so far.”

“Perhaps we’d better leave it to the next game we shall play against each other,” suggested Nick, with a peculiar smile.

“Yes,” she assented gayly. “The next game we shall play. Do you think you will win that game, Colonel Pearson?”



“If I do, it won’t be for lack of a worthy adversary,” he replied, with a deep bow.

They chatted about golf and other things for another half hour. Then the baroness, after thanking “the colonel” for the pleasant evening he had afforded her, arose to go to her room.

Nick Carter accompanied her to the elevator. When the car had shot upward, he hurried back to the table where they had been sitting in the restaurant and picked up the half-burned wax match he had dropped after lighting his cigarette.

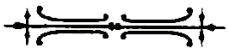
As he slipped the match into his waistcoat pocket, to keep company with the other two whole matches he had borrowed from Baroness Latour’s gold match box, he ran against James Mallory in the lobby.

“Can I have your head porter for an hour or two this evening, Mr. Mallory?” asked the detective, in a low tone. “I’ve noticed him around here. He’s the kind of husky chap I may need.”

“Why, what——”

“Never mind about talking it over, Mr. Mallory,” interrupted the detective, with a protesting smile. “Can I have the man?”

“Certainly! His name is Mike Corrigan. He is a good, dependable fellow, and strong enough for anything you are likely to ask of him. Moreover, he is not afraid of anything. If you will come to my office, I will have him come there.”



Mike Corrigan was quite willing to accompany Colonel Pearson anywhere, and after a few minutes' conversation, it was arranged that Mike was to meet the detective in the lobby in fifteen minutes.

"Put a coat on," directed Nick. "Have you such a thing as a revolver?"

"Never owned a gun in my life," was Mike's reply.

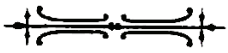
"Never mind. I'll bring one down for you. You can fire it off, I suppose, if it should become necessary?"

"I can that," laughed Mike. "And swing a club, too."

At this moment two telegrams were handed to Nick Carter. One was from his assistant, Chick, saying he was on his way to Delaware, with the bloodhound, Captain, and the other came from Joseph, Nick Carter's head man-servant in his Madison Avenue home. This latter message read:

"According your instructions, have sent black steel box labeled number four on third shelf to left of door in laboratory."

The detective went up to his room and put on a serviceable business suit in place of his evening clothes, with a warm cap that he could pull well down over his eyes. He kicked off his light patent-leather pumps and substituted a pair of heavy waterproof shoes.



Finally he covered himself up in a long overcoat, in the pockets of which he dropped two automatic pistols, fully charged.

Before leaving his room he compared the wax matches he had got from the baroness in the restaurant with the burned match he had picked up in Mrs. van Dietrich's room. They were the same kind exactly.

"I see you're there, all right, Mike," he remarked cheerily, as the head porter walked up to him in the lobby. "Wait a moment, while I go in to see Mr. Mallory and Mr. Savage."

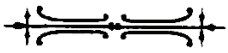
He found both partners in their office, and bringing out the burned wax match, he said, in a businesslike, brief manner:

"I should like you, please, to examine the baggage of Mrs. van Dietrich and find out whether there are in it any wax matches like this. Also ask her maid, Mary Cook, if she or Mrs. van D. ever used such matches."

"Very well," answered Savage, picking up the burned match. "We will do it, of course. But I don't see the point."

"That makes no difference," retorted Nick. "The point is important. Did you find out anything at the railroad station this afternoon—whether anybody from the hotel went away?"

"Nobody has gone all day, except two people who live in the village, and whom the station agent knows quite well. You see, this is only a branch, which the railroad company ran up

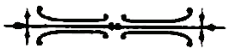


here for the benefit of our hotel, so it is not used much except by patrons of our house."

"I see," nodded Nick Carter. "Well, you may not see either Mike or me until two or three o'clock in the morning. Good night!"

"I hope you will find out something," called out Mallory, as he went out.

"With ordinary luck, I hope to do so," were Nick Carter's parting words.



CHAPTER V.

AN EXPERIMENT IN CHEMISTRY.

Florine!" said the Baroness Latour, as she entered her rooms after dining with Nick Carter. "I am going to do a little chemistry work in the bathroom. Of course, I am not at home to anybody. Some of those people about the hotel are disposed to be friendly, but I can't be bothered with them to-night."

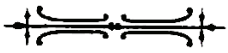
"Very well," returned Florine. "Shall I help you change?"

"Yes."

They retired to the baroness' bedroom, and in ten minutes the baroness came forth in a neat gingham gown. Over this she wore an apron of the same material, but of darker pattern, that covered her completely.

Florine knew just what to do for the experiments her employer was about to make.

From two large trunks which stood in her own room she took a small electric stove, crucibles, retorts, and similar articles. Also a glass table, which folded when packed away, but could be set up quite firmly in a few minutes. It was the kind of table that is often used by experimenting chemists.



“That will do,” the baroness told her then. “You can stay out here, in my sitting room. Remember that no one is to be allowed to come in until I tell you.”

She shut herself in the bathroom, the ground-glass window of which was open a little at the top, and placed a crucible, containing some colorless liquid, on the electric stove.

She had connected the stove by wires to one of the electric fixtures, after removing the bulb, and thus got all the power she required.

Soon there came a slight hissing from the crucible.

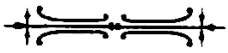
She darted over to it, and having put on a pair of asbestos gloves, lifted the crucible to the glass table.

Next, she adjusted an oxygen mask with a glass front, and, taking off the asbestos gloves, replaced them with others of rubber. She knew well the necessity of taking every precaution when experimenting with dangerous elements.

Taking a small bottle from a cabinet, which had been one of the articles brought in by Florine, she poured half of the liquid in it into the crucible.

A violent agitation of the contents of the crucible caused her to leap back hastily. It was evidently caused by mixing the two substances too abruptly.

Soon the disturbance in the crucible subsided. Then the baroness poured the remainder of the stuff into the crucible,



leaving the bottle—it was really only a vial—absolutely empty.

There was no further bubbling, but the mixture in the crucible, which had been a dull blue, grew lighter and lighter in color, until it was a very pale green, which in turn resolved itself into a sickly yellow.

As the last tinge of green disappeared, the baroness took another vial from the cabinet. This vial was filled with a liquid that looked like water.

She emptied it all into the crucible.

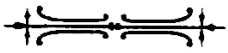
The liquid immediately took on a rich amber hue. As it did so, she hastily reached for a glass cover, with a small, funnellike hole in the top.

Over this hole she fitted a rubber tube, forcing the other end of the tube tightly into a long, narrow bottle.

Hardly had she secured the tube and lifted the bottle, when a heavy vapor arose inside the crucible, easily visible through the glass top.

The light vapor went swiftly through the tube, and the long glass bottle could be seen filling.

In five minutes the amber fluid had entirely disappeared from the crucible, while the long bottle was full of vapor.



“This is well,” muttered the baroness, as she watched the experiment with intent eyes. “Everything is working out all right. Now for the next stage.”

Skillfully, she withdrew the tube from the bottle, and in its place tightly inserted a stopper made of india rubber. The mixture she had prepared with such care would have eaten through a cork in a few minutes.

Having progressed thus far, the baroness carefully placed the glass-tubelike bottle in a steel case, padded inside, which had been specially made for it.

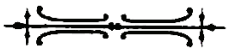
Screwing on the cap firmly, she laid the case on the glass table, and stood thoughtfully regarding it for several seconds.

“I’ll have to try its strength,” she decided, half aloud. “This is the dangerous part of the experiment.”

She brought forward a large bottle, on which was a bulb and spraying contrivance carefully fitted to it.

The ever-useful Florine had seen that the bottle was ready with the other paraphernalia her employer would want. Florine knew nearly as much about it all as the baroness herself.

The baroness carefully sprayed the air of the bathroom, after closing the window at the top. She wanted no outside atmosphere to interfere with the test she was about to make.



Now, for the first time, she removed the strange-looking mask she had worn throughout her operations. It protected her lungs entirely from the dangerous gases. There was always the possibility that they might escape, in spite of all her care with the vessels she used.

As she took off the mask, leaving her mouth exposed, her eyes dropped heavily and her head swam.

She stumbled slightly as she made her way to the ground-glass window and pulled down the upper sash.

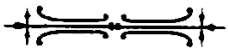
The current of air revived her at once.

She stood there for a few moments inhaling the pure sea atmosphere luxuriously.

“This shows it is a success,” she murmured. “I was so careful that hardly a whiff of the gas could escape. Yet, even after spraying the room as I did, it almost overcame me. It is better than the other stuff I used, I am sure. I’ll put this to the proof to-night, if I get a chance—and I think I shall.”

Opening the window wider, she stood there, ruminating, a curious smile on her beautiful young face.

“Nicholas Carter! As if it would be possible for me not to know him because he chooses to call himself Colonel Pearson and assumes an indolent manner that is not his own at all! And I have been playing golf and dining with him! Well, it is



all in the game! He says himself he does not know how our next game is to come out. We shall see."

She went out of the bathroom and told Florine to put everything away.

This order was obeyed so thoroughly and swiftly, that in about five minutes nothing was to be seen in the bathroom to suggest the experiment just carried on.

The open window had allowed the last breath of the noxious vapor to escape, and none of the paraphernalia was in sight.

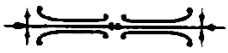
The glass experimenting table had been folded up and put away, and the electric stove, crucible, and retorts had gone with it, each being packed away into its own particular recess in the trunks.

Only the steel case—tubelike, as was the glass bottle of deadly vapor inside—was placed in a black leather bag, which snapped shut with a patent spring lock.

This bag the baroness put into another trunk with her own hands. She would not trust even Florine to do anything with the bottle in its steel case.

For two hours she sat in the darkness, peering out to sea, where the lights of the yacht could be seen blinking uncertainly.

She did not talk to her maid, although Florine was in the room, and, although quite quiet, was wide awake.



It seemed as if there must be something more than the ordinary relations of mistress and maid between them, for Florine made no complaint of the long vigil. Neither did the baroness take any notice of her, as she might have done if there had been no mutual understanding.

“Lock the door after me when I go out, Florine,” were the words with which the Baroness Latour at last broke the silence. “And be ready to let me in quickly when I return.”

“Very well.”

Florine made this response in a low, colorless voice.

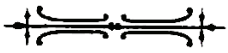
There was no surprise at the baroness going secretly from her rooms at midnight, nor at her giving these orders about the door.

It seemed as if she knew what her employer had in hand, and was in thorough accord with the proceedings.

The baroness had taken off the gingham gown she had worn in the makeshift laboratory, and had replaced it with a house dress of costly material, but which was made up rather plainly.

Over this gown she slipped a voluminous black cloak. Then she went over to the trunk in which she had placed the black bag, and drew the bag forth.

“The door is locked, Florine?” she asked, without turning her head.



“Yes, my lady!” answered the maid, with a touch of mockery as she used this form of address that is so uncommon in America. “I have just looked, to make sure.”

“Stand by it, in case of accidents,” ordered the baroness.

Without speaking, Florine took her station at the door which led to the outer corridor, although she knew such a precaution was unnecessary.

The baroness took from the bag the steel case into which she had packed the glass cylinder containing the powerful vapor she had produced in the bathroom.

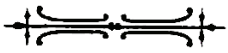
Unscrewing the cap of the case, she drew out the glass cylinder, and, holding it carefully in her left hand, reached again into the bag with her right.

This time she brought out a diminutive rubber bulb, attached to a syringe with a thin, hollow, threaded screw on the bottom.

Carefully she sent the screw through the center of the rubber cork in the glass cylinder. When this had been accomplished, she concealed the cylinder in the wide sleeve of her cloak.

“Open the door, Florine! And close it as soon as I am outside.”

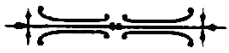
“Ready?” asked Florine, as she glided, soft-footed as a cat, to the door, and stood there with her hand upon the key.



“Yes.”

All this was said in the same low, but distinct tones in which the baroness and her maid had communicated with each other ever since the former had come in after dining with Nick Carter.

The door opened silently. The baroness slipped through to the corridor. The door closed after her.



CHAPTER VI.

WITH THE AID OF HER MEN.

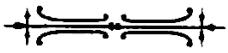
The lights had been lowered throughout the hotel. In the corridors a small electric light burned at wide intervals, with an occasional red glow to show where the fire exits were situated.

The baroness was glad there was so little illumination. She saw a light through the transom over the door of number forty-four, which was Nick Carter's room. But it was not strong, and she decided that it might have been burning in the bathroom, casting only a reflection into the bedchamber.

"Strange that he should sleep with a light anywhere about him," she muttered. "He isn't the kind of man to do that, I should think. I don't care, so long as he is asleep, however."

She listened intently outside this door for at least a minute. So keen was her hearing that she believed she would hear his breathing unless he slept more quietly than most men.

Not a sound reached her, and she crept noiselessly along the corridor until she got to the bedroom door of a titled



Englishman, who had been the center of attention, especially among the women, ever since he had been at the hotel.

His name was Lord Vinton, and he was understood to be possessed of enormous wealth.

A curious smile passed over the countenance of the baroness. She listened outside Lord Vinton's door, as she had at Nick Carter's.

"No mistake about it in this case," she murmured, below her breath. "His lordship snores like a balky motor car. That makes it all the easier for me."

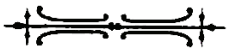
In a few seconds she did all she had come to do.

It did not look anything serious, if there had been any one there to observe her movements.

She seemed only to be passing her hands about the door and then hiding them in her cloak, ere she moved away.

But this is what she did: She slipped the glass tube, with the rubber stopper, from her cloak sleeve, inserted the mouth of the syringe into the keyhole, and pressed gently upon the rubber bulb.

The result was to inject into the bedroom of Lord Vinton a small quantity of one of the strongest and most effective narcotics known to science.



The almost invisible vapor went through the keyhole and instantly spread to all parts of the apartment. Every nook and crack of the room was filled with the stuff, and it was absolutely unbreathable by any human being.

So strong was it that only an unforeseen accident could prevent its taking action. Once under its influence, and the sturdiest man would fall into a deathlike stupor, which might last for several hours.

The baroness had made the vapor as strong as it was possible to do without rendering it too dangerous.

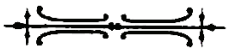
She had no intention of killing any of her victims. Her object merely was to make them unconscious, and then get possession of them.

Incidentally, she took care to freight herself with all their portable wealth, such as jewelry and precious stones.

Even this last she did not do herself in the case of Lord Vinton.

As will have been divined, this mysterious young and beautiful woman who chose to be known at the Hotel Amsterdam as the Baroness Latour had plenty of men at her orders.

All she did was to prepare the way for them, and then let them do the rough work.



She satisfied herself by listening at the keyhole—in which the key had been left—that the spray had operated properly, and that Lord Vinton was most assuredly in a state of coma. Then she glided swiftly back to her own rooms, was let in without a moment's delay by the watchful Florine, and sank into a chair to regain her breath.

"You may go to bed, Florine."

Florine, the docile, said "Good night!" and departed to her own apartment, adjoining that of her employer.

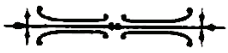
The baroness, still wearing her black cloak, threw open the window of the sitting room, and, her room in darkness, looked across the bay at the white yacht, which she could just make out in the gloom.

"They ought to be here soon," she murmured, as she placed the glass cylinder in its steel case. "I won't send another signal. It might be caught by somebody else. Besides, it is not necessary."

She was right. It was not necessary to signal her men on the yacht, gently rocking some two miles from shore.

On the other hand, it was nearly an hour before her ear caught the subdued thumping of muffled oars.

"They have to row slowly," she said to herself. "That's so. Even with oars muffled, they might be heard if they came too fast."



A soft whistle came from below as the laboring of the oars in their padded rowlocks ceased.

Looking out of the window, she could just discern a dark patch on the water immediately beneath.

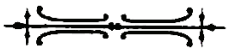
She did not reply to the whistle. Instead, she drew from under her cloak a coil of thin, tough wire. On one end of it was a leaden weight, like a large fishing-line sinker.

Dropping the leaden sinker over the sill, she paid out the wire until the weight dropped into the sea. She knew just how far this was by a scrap of red ribbon she had the night before tied on the wire at a certain spot, when she had measured the distance from her window to the water.

Three sharp tugs at the wire told her that the other end had been found by the men in the boat. She began to pull the wire back, and soon she had the end of a thick, strong silken rope which had been attached to the end of the wire with a well-made sailor's knot.

The baroness untied the silken rope and made it fast with a similar knot to the handle of her room door. This door was locked and bolted, and she had satisfied herself that the handle was a solid one.

The way in which she knotted the silken line to it, indicated that she was an expert in handling ropes. She did it as easily and swiftly as any experienced seaman.



Going back to the window, she jerked the cord three times, while looking down.

Soon the silken cord became taut under a heavy weight. It strained and gave a little where it crossed the edge of the window sill.

“All right?” she whispered.

“All right!” was the answering grunt, in a man’s voice.

It was only a few seconds later when the figure of a man appeared above the window ledge. It climbed through the window and stood by her side, seemingly waiting for orders.

“You did that very well, Kennedy!” she whispered. “Is my uncle there?”

“No. He said it was not necessary for him to come.”

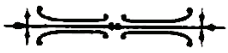
“Too lazy, I suppose. Who else is in the boat?”

“Four of the crew.”

“Very well! Signal down for one of the men to come up, and we’ll go on with what we have to do.”

“All right, mademoiselle.”

Kennedy, first mate of the yacht *Idaline* lying out there in the bay, shook the rope up which he had climbed. As there came an answering shake, he called down softly:



“Groton!”

“Aye, aye!”

“Come up here—quick!”

The lithe young foremast man who answered to the name of Groton came up, hand over hand, so swiftly, that he was on the window sill while the mate was still looking down.

“That’s right!” remarked the baroness quietly. “Now, you two wait here, while I go back to the room and get things ready. No noise, of course!”

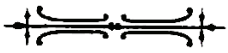
“Shall I lock the door while you are out?” whispered Kennedy.

“Yes. Somebody might happen to be about and try the door, if they saw me in the corridor. I’ll give the usual signal.”

She reached into her black bag to make sure certain things were there. Then she went out and slipped along the corridor on the thick carpet, while Kennedy softly secured her sitting-room door inside.

“I wish Carter would put out that light of his,” she murmured, as she passed his room. “I don’t trust him, and I’d rather think he was asleep.”

She stood again outside Lord Vinton’s door, and as she came near the keyhole, she could distinguish the pungent odor of the narcotic she had sprayed into the bedroom.



It has practically all blown out of the window by this time," she thought. "If I didn't know it so well, I don't suppose I should smell it."

From the black bag she took out what looked like a pair of long slim scissors, with spreading claws, which could be opened and closed at will.

It was an implement for turning a key in a lock from the opposite side of the door. To police and criminals it is known as an "outsider."

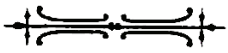
Gripping the end of the key through the keyhole with the powerful nippers, she turned the key almost as easily as if she had been inside the door.

"So much for that," she murmured. "But there is the bolt! Well, I guess I can negotiate that."

She had provided for the inmate of the room obeying the familiar injunction found in all hotel bedrooms nowadays: "Guests will please lock and bolt their doors before retiring for the night."

The implement she took out of her bag now was not much like the "outsider," but it proved equally effective.

Thin as paper, it was strong and highly tempered, and, after a few moments of careful manipulation, she had the bolt back and the door a little way open.



The room was in darkness. She felt for and turned the button of the electric light, but she left the light on only long enough to show her where the gas jet was. She lighted the gas, turned it low, and then put out the incandescent.

Going to the bed, she gazed for a few moments at the face of the man who lay unconscious in it.

One hand lay outside the counterpane. She lifted the hand boldly, and pressing her fingers upon the wrist, felt for the pulse. It was faint, but steady.

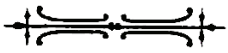
“He will be all right after a while,” she muttered. “That mixture of mine does its work scientifically. It knocks them cold for the time being, and afterward they are as well as ever. That old German chemist certainly knows his business, and this formula was worth all I paid for it.”

She hurried back to her room, gave the signal, and was admitted by the mate.

“Come to this room—you and Groton—and dress this man in the bed. Put everything on him that he should wear, including necktie and collar, watch fob and so on. Make him look as if he had dressed himself.”

Kennedy grinned and shook his head doubtfully.

“That won’t be so easy,” he protested. “Dressing a man who can’t help himself will be a tough proposition.”



“Never mind! Do as well as you can. I’ll show you the room. Then I’ll come back here. When you have him ready, send Groton to tell me. You stay in the room till I come. We have to get him away.”

The first mate nodded, and, accompanied by Groton, followed the baroness to the room of Lord Vinton. There the baroness left the two men to get his lordship dressed, and returned to her sitting room.

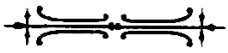
Florine slept through it all.

“He’s all fixed,” announced Kennedy, ten minutes later, when the baroness had been called back to Lord Vinton’s room by Groton. “We’ve put him into these light-colored togs and this funny soft hat. We couldn’t find any others handy, except his evening clothes, and I didn’t think you wanted him in them.”

“That wouldn’t have made any particular difference,” she returned. “Leave him on the bed for a minute and come over here.”

She went to the two trunks and handsome traveling bags at the other side of the room, and brought forth a quantity of jewelry which would hardly have been expected in the baggage of a wealthy nobleman traveling only for pleasure.

Rings, with diamonds, bracelets, brooches, and other gewgaws for women to wear, were wrapped in tissue paper or embedded in silk-lined cases, while scarfpins, cigarette cases,



jeweled watch charms, and kindred articles of masculine use were plentiful.

"Lord Vinton may turn out not to be a lord, after all," muttered the baroness. "Even if he is, he does not mind turning a few honest dollars by importing jewelry on the side. I hope the dollars he expects to make *will* be honest, by the way. But it would be interesting to know how much duty he paid on all this."

When she had piled up everything on the floor she cared to take, she coolly dropped the loot into two of Kennedy's capacious outside pockets.

He wore a nautical pea-jacket, and his pocket room was extensive.

"Now, boys!" she whispered. "Work quickly. I will go ahead and see if the corridor is clear, and have my door half open. Stand at the door, Kennedy, and watch me. When you see me get to my room, I'll hold up my hand."

"I get you!"

"That will mean 'All right!' You and Groton pick up your man then and bring him along, just as you did Mrs. van Dietrich. Now! Careful!"

She skimmed lightly along the corridor, and directly afterward the two sailors followed, carrying between them the unconscious form of Lord Vinton.

Giving a signal to the two men still in the boat, Kennedy superintended the tying of the silken rope under Vinton's arms, and the three of them lifted him over the window sill and let him dangle.

"Ready below?" questioned Kennedy softly.

"Ready! Let him come!"

Down went his lordship, who was laid in the bottom of the boat, while Kennedy turned to the baroness.

"Anything more, mademoiselle?"

"Not at present."

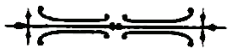
"Any message for Captain Latell?"

"Tell him to keep a sharp lookout at all times, and to watch for signals from me. Have his telephone ready."

"It is always ready, mademoiselle. He has it in his own window, and some one is always near."

"Good! That's all."

Kennedy and Groton slid down the rope to the boat. The baroness untied it from the handle of her door and threw the rope after them.



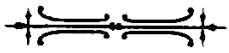
The wire was again coiled, and, with the leaden weight, was in her black leather bag, which fastened with a strong patent lock.

Before finally leaving Lord Vinton's room, after her victim had been brought to her own apartment, she had gone back to shoot the bolt and lock into place again. Also, she had used her steel implements to close the door, in about the same way as she had opened it, but by a reverse process.

Now, when a soft splash, as the oars dipped, told her the boat was on its way back to the yacht, she closed the window, looked about her with a satisfied sigh, and then went calmly to her bedroom.

Ten minutes later, this mysterious and beautiful girl, who could carry out such an audacious enterprise as that just finished without showing any particular emotion, lay down, without removing her attire, and, almost at once, seemed to be sound asleep.

When Florine went in to brush her employer's hair the next morning, the maid thought she never had seen the baroness look fresher or seem in better spirits.



CHAPTER VII.

NICK LIES IN WAIT.

It may be explained at once that Nick Carter was not in his bedroom in the Hotel Amsterdam when the baroness saw the light through the transom. The detective did not want anybody to speculate on his whereabouts that night, and he argued that if a light was seen in the room of Colonel Pearson, it would be assumed that the colonel was inside.

He had determined to find out what the mysterious abductors had done with Harvey L. Drago, who had vanished into thin air, in broad daylight.

After playing a sane and deliberate game of golf, it was not to be credited that Mr. Drago had made away with himself. Nick brushed that aside as soon as it came to his mind.

The wealthy young American had been kidnaped by somebody, no doubt, and the object of that somebody could hardly be anything else than to exact a large ransom.

It had occurred to Nick Carter, when told that Mrs. van Dietrich had melted away from her bedroom in the night, that

perhaps an aëroplane had been employed. But all the conditions were against that.

Neither could an automobile have been used without its being seen.

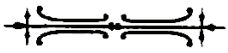
After turning everything over in his mind, including the possibility of Drago having been hidden in the woods, he could not make that theory apply to his own satisfaction in the case of Mrs. van Dietrich.

The dear lady was rather large, and she would surely be hysterical when she came to herself.

No, it would be too risky to keep that eminent leader of society among a lot of trees and expect to keep her quiet.

He thought of the wireless telephone he had seen used by the baroness from the window of her room, and though he had not been convinced that she had any deeper purpose than to amuse herself—as a wealthy young woman of lively fancy might conceivably do in this manner—he remembered the yacht at anchor out in the bay, and wondered whether or not the baroness was signaling to that vessel.

He had never noticed anybody coming from the yacht to the hotel. But that did not carry any significance. There were many handsome homes along the coast in this vicinity, and the yacht might be owned by any one of the dozen or so of millionaires who were accustomed to spend part of their summer in Delaware.



That he was suspicious of the baroness was natural to a man of his quick, deductive mind. The discovery of the burned match in Mrs. van Dietrich's room would have been sufficient to make him so, after he had satisfied himself that the baroness used the same kind of thick wax matches.

Another touch of evidence in connection with the matches was that he had found a scrap of gilt and colored paper on the floor of Mrs. van Dietrich's bedroom—part of a label which he found had come from the original box containing them.

In the restaurant he had caught a glimpse of nearly the whole label in the baroness' chatelaine bag when she had taken out her cigarette box. The paper had been pulled out accidentally, and pushed back again.

Nick decided that, as the design was unusual, as well as artistic, the baroness was keeping it as a curiosity.

The label was not all there. The part missing would have fitted in with the scrap Nick had in his pocket.

Going further in his speculations, Nick recalled that, although Mrs. van Dietrich had disappeared in the night, when it would be comparatively easy to get her out of the hotel unobserved and take her to any desired place at a distance, Harvey L. Drago had been spirited away in broad daylight.

The only theory Nick could apply to Drago's disappearance was that he was somewhere near the hotel, and would not be taken away to his final destination till nightfall.

Acting on this hypothesis, the detective, with the head porter, were out now, at night, looking for the abductors of Mr. Drago, in the expectation that when they got a clew to the one case, they would find it leading them to the other.

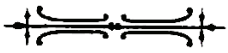
They had for two or three hours been moving about in the dense woods that surrounded the Hotel Amsterdam, and hid the sea beach from the highroad, when Nick Carter took a seat on a rock overlooking the water, with the porter by his side, and remarked that it was time to rest a while.

“I’m not tired,” protested the porter, Mike Corrigan. “I wouldn’t mind betting you are not, either, colonel. You are stopping here because you think it a good place to look around.”

The head porter grinned as he said this, and in the faint light that came from the cloud-veiled moon Nick returned the grin. He was pleased to note that Mike Corrigan was of an observant kind.

“You’re not far off, Mike. I see there is a place here where a boat has landed, and it is just possible another one may come. See those furrows in the sand above tide line on the beach, and do you notice that those soft shells have been ground by something, and left, all broken, where they have been pressed into the sand?”

“That’s right,” agreed Mike. “I see it, just where the moon strikes. But I’ll confess I wouldn’t have noticed them if you



hadn't spoke—not in this poor light. Think that was done by a boat?"

"I am sure of it," was Nick's quick reply. "It was the keel of a boat that ground these shells, and the round bottom made the wide mark on either side. It isn't hard to see where a boat has been before the signs are washed away."

"I don't see any other place where a boat could be run up on the shore, either," observed Mike.

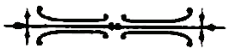
"That's why I am expecting we shall see another boat—or perhaps the same one—come up here, if we stay for a while. But get back into the woods. We can watch there without being seen."

"The moon is in its last quarter," remarked Corrigan. "So there isn't much light. If it wasn't for the stars, I don't think we could make out anything at all."

"We'll get to the other side of this point," went on Nick. "We can see all over the bay from there, and still not be too conspicuous."

"'Conspicuous' is good!" muttered Mike. "I wonder what in thunder it means."

Nick Carter led the way to the spot he had selected. It was a thick mass of shrubbery only a few yards above high tide. Here he told Corrigan to sit down.



The porter obeyed—so heavily that he broke several twigs, which crackled with much more noise than Nick cared for. He gave Mike a sharp touch with the toe of his shoe.

The detective had seen some signs which had escaped his companion, and he did not want any noise. Nick subsided.

Nick took out a pair of powerful night glasses and trained them on the light-studded yacht far out in the bay.

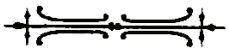
It was something about this yacht which had attracted his attention in the first place, and which had caused him to shut off the porter so peremptorily when he had begun to protest against being gently kicked.

Nick Carter lay flat upon the ground, examining the shadowy form of the yacht, and trying to satisfy himself as to the meaning of certain movements he observed.

It was a full hour before he moved to any noticeable degree, although he had shifted his position now and then, as he sought to relieve his cramped limbs.

But his night glasses had been always fixed on the yacht, and his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom so much that he could tell fairly well what the general state of affairs was on her deck.

Corrigan was about to whisper a question as a sigh of satisfaction escaped his companion. But Nick shook him off impatiently and told him to keep quite quiet.



The detective had seen a bustle on the deck of the yacht which he believed signified that a boat was being lowered. But if it was, they were dropping it on the other side, and he could not make out enough of their movements to be sure what was going on.

“If it isn’t a boat, then I don’t know what they’re after,” he murmured, under his breath. “Hello! What’s that?”

Far out, some little distance from the yacht, his glasses had enabled him to distinguish a phosphorescent flash, repeated again and again on the dark surface of the bay.

Nick Carter had seen phosphorescent gleams of this kind too many times not to be able to interpret the meaning of any particular kind or number.

A single one, or even many, might have been caused by the jumping of fish. That would flash up the bright glow so often seen in mid-ocean at night.

But regular gleams, such as Nick saw now, and which developed into shining patches one by one, could have been caused only by the regular dipping of oars. The space between the patches represented the width of a rowboat.

“They are rowing two pairs,” he murmured. “And the boat is rather heavy, too. What are they after?”

As they came nearer, he could see that there were five black patches in the boat, and it did not take him long to resolve

these patches into men, two were rowing and one was steering. The other two sat still.

“This looks like a fight, if we want to save Drago,” muttered Nick, rather louder than his musings had been so far.

“What?” asked Corrigan.

The porter’s view had been obscured by the shrubbery. Moreover, he had no night glass to help his vision.

His curiosity would not be denied any longer, however, and he squeezed his way around.

Nick Carter placed the night glass in his hand.

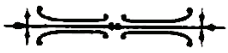
“There you are, Corrigan! Take a squint through these!”

The porter obeyed, and after some moments of adjusting the glasses, he got the boatload of men into focus, and uttered a low grunt of wonder.

“Five of ’em, eh? Well, colonel, that will be two each for us, and whichever of us gets through first, let him have the odd one.”

Nick smiled at this businesslike proposition—which also had an agreeable sporting flavor—and nodded in acquiescence.

“All right, Mike! That goes! But—one thing, mind!—I take the first man! You can have the second. Then I’ll tackle the

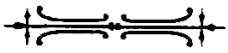


third, and the fourth is yours. By that time we'll know who gets the fifth."

"Fine!" chuckled the porter. "You've been in scraps like this before, I can see."

The boat was gliding straight toward the point where Nick Carter and his companion were hiding in the shrubbery. Then, suddenly, when it had come within fifty yards of the shore, it swerved abruptly, and shot toward that part of the Hotel Amsterdam where the windows of the baroness overlooked the bay.

As the boat got nearer to the hotel, Nick's night glass, plus his keen eyes, enabled him to make out a feminine figure at one of the darkened windows.



CHAPTER VIII.

NICK DEALS WITH ODDS.

Throughout the performance of Kennedy and Groton climbing the rope to the window of the baroness, the detective lay there, with his night glass turned upon them, and when he saw the form of a man coming down on the rope, he knew he was on the right track.

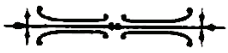
“Shall we go back to the hotel and break in her door?” asked Corrigan.

“No. We couldn’t get there, for one thing. Everything would be over before we could interfere. Besides, that would not help much. I want to prove that the kidnaping has been done from the hotel. But, also, I want to catch them in the act.”

“That’s what you’re doing, isn’t it?”

“I am, in a way,” answered the detective. “But it would be only my word against theirs, and you may be sure that people who can carry out a scheme like this successfully are not bad as liars.”

“They’re going back to the yacht now,” remarked Corrigan.



“I see they are leaving the hotel. Whether they are going directly to the yacht remains to be seen. I am inclined to think they are not.”

“Why?”

“Mr. Drago is undoubtedly somewhere in this wood, and it is time they took him away. They would be sure to do these two jobs under one, I think. It is the methodical manner in which the leading spirit of the enterprise has everything done.”

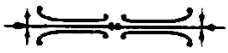
“The boss of this thing must be the husband of that young baroness, I should think,” said Corrigan. “Or perhaps her brother.”

“Why don’t you think she may be doing it herself?” asked the detective, smiling.

“A pretty girl like that wouldn’t do it. She couldn’t,” was the porter’s positive reply. “But she might be drawn into it by some of her menfolks. Things like that happen sometimes. You see it in the newspapers, anyhow.”

It was not long before it was shown that Nick Carter had been correct in his belief that the boat would put in to get Drago from his hiding place in the wood, wherever it might be.

The boat stopped in the middle of the bay, and Carter, from his place behind the bush, could see one of the men who appeared to be in command—in fact, it was Kennedy, the first mate of the yacht—looking around him with a night glass.



He scanned the shore as far as he could see it, and also looked steadily at the hotel.

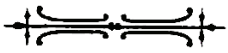
Nick Carter smiled as he thought he saw the glass trained in the direction of his own window in the hotel, room number forty-four. He could not be sure, in the darkness, but he believed he was right.

“My charming dinner companion must have told him whereabouts my room is situated,” he said to himself. “Even if he cannot be sure which is my window, I am conceited enough to think he is trying to assure himself that I am not watching him from one of them. Much good it will do him!”

As they came on, the oarsmen stopped rowing. Then, as the boat’s head shifted a little, they headed straight for the beach where Nick Carter and the porter were watching.

The muffled oars made no sound as they came up on the beach, and the easy way in which the bow grounded on the soft sand proved that the craft was under the command of a finished mariner.

No sooner was the boat pulled so well up on the shore that it did not need securing in any other way, than the five men all tumbled out and pulled her a little farther. This done, they stood silently in a group while their commander looked about him.



Now, if he had chosen, Nick Carter could have captured the whole party at the point of the pistol, shooting them down if they resisted.

But his natural love of "playing the game" forbade anything of that kind. He contented himself with keeping them covered —with Corrigan's pistol, as well as his own—and watching in silence.

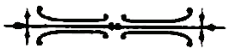
Had Nick known who the Baroness Latour really was, he would have brought half a dozen men with him, instead of one. And with good reason. He would have been aware that the caliber of the five men in the boat was of a kind not easily put down, and that any one of them would have gone to his death cheerfully for his beautiful leader.

There were several minutes of inactivity, during which the five men stood watching the silent, insensible figure in the boat, while seemingly on the watch for somebody else to come.

"I ought, perhaps, to jump in here and rescue that man in the boat at any cost," thought Nick. "But it wouldn't do. I should have only half my work done, even if Mike and I can knock out these five—as I believe we can. I've made up my mind to take Drago back to the hotel, and I'm going to do it."

It was five minutes afterward when a soft whistle arose from the woods behind him. Kennedy replied with a similar signal.

"Get ready, Corrigan!" whispered Nick Carter.



“I am ready,” was the prompt response.

There was the sound of branches moving with a swish, and three men came out of the wood together.

One, whose stiff gait indicated that his hands were tied behind him, so that he was afraid to step freely, was between the other two, each of whom held him by an elbow.

As they came clear of the shadows, Nick saw that, not only were the hands of the man in the middle bound, but a handkerchief was fastened tightly over his mouth.

“Drago!” muttered the detective. “It’s just what I expected. They’ve got some one else from the hotel, and stopped on their way to pick up this one from the wood.”

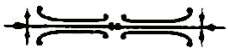
As the newcomers came up to the other five men, Nick heard somebody say softly:

“That you, Mr. Kennedy?”

“Yes,” came the reply.

“Kennedy!” muttered Nick. “Well, it is a common name. This may not be the Kennedy I know. But, taking it with everything else I’ve found out, it looks as if it might be.”

There was a low conversation, of which the detective did not catch much—not enough to know what it was all about, indeed—until he heard the man who had first spoken respond to a remark that did not reach his ears:



“No, sir. We haven’t heard a sound or seen anybody since we came into the woods.”

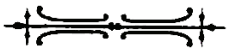
Nick tried to decide what this meant, and to whom they were referring. He did not suppose it was himself, or that the baroness had noticed him leaving the hotel after taking dinner with her. But then, Nick Carter did not know just what means the beautiful young woman had at her disposal for finding out things that might interest her.

“Well, get him aboard,” ordered Kennedy. “We’ll hustle them both over to the yacht, and then get a little sleep. This thing doesn’t have to keep us all up on a double watch, if we don’t waste time.”

The men walked along the beach with their captive, and the detective might have got his hands on them without much trouble by taking them by surprise, when Mike Corrigan “spilled the beans” by an unforeseen and peculiar accident.

In his eagerness to hear what was said, he had leaned forward in the shrubbery as far as he dared. Unfortunately, he had nothing firm to give him a hand hold, so he was standing in a teetering attitude, when anything might have knocked him over.

There was more trouble, too. A small twig, impossible for him to see in the gloom, was immediately under his face, and as he bent lower, it suddenly popped into his nose, tickling that organ beyond the point of bearableness.



There could be only one result, and it came quickly.

Mike Corrigan was a determined man, and he fought nobly against the irritation by holding his nose above the bridge and rubbing it all over. He had heard somewhere that this treatment would stop the most insistent sneeze.

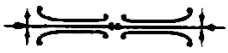
It did not work in this instance, however. The sneeze would not be denied. There were several choking gasps—not to say snorts. Then, bursting all bonds, a terrific blast turned itself loose, and Nick Carter knew it was all off.

Even at ordinary times the husky head porter was noted for the resounding force of his sneeze. But, coming as it did, after this frantic struggle to hold it back, Corrigan achieved an effect in advanced sternutation which awoke the echoes both on sea and land, and made the very trees quiver.

The group of men paused in consternation just as they were about to enter the boat, and, hearing Nick Carter jump to his feet at the same moment, they realized that strangers—probably enemies—were close behind them.

“See who it is, men!” ordered Kennedy.

The sailors seemed all to be armed, for several revolver barrels shone in what little light there was as they came breaking their way through the shrubbery.



“There is no use trying to hide our presence now,” was all Nick said to the porter, as he prepared for battle. “This means fight.”

“That suits me,” responded Mike. “I supposed it was what we came out for to-night.”

The philosophy of the porter made Nick forget a little of his chagrin at the way his plans had been upset. He felt that, though the odds were so much against them, he had a man by his side who would help him to leave a mark on their adversaries, no matter how the fracas came out, and that was the main thing under the circumstances.

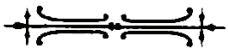
Nick pushed the shrubbery apart, and, with Mike close on his heels and his automatic pistol gripped in his steady fingers, he stepped out to the open sandy beach.

Keeping the oncoming sailors at bay by raising his left hand authoritatively—although the leveled automatic in his right may have had something to do with it—he looked straight into the face of the first mate of the yacht, as a fugitive gleam of moonlight fell across it.

“So!” ejaculated Nick Carter. “It is you, Kennedy?”

“That’s what I’m called,” was the defiant response.

“I heard your name spoken just now, but I did not know that it was you,” went on Nick. “It is some time since we met. I might have known that only the brilliant and complex mind of



Mademoiselle Valeria could have devised and carried out this strange series of kidnapings at the Hotel Amsterdam. Then, of course, that yacht out there is the *Idaline*."

"You can guess anything you like," returned Kennedy gruffly. "No matter who is behind this affair, you can bet it is going through without your interference, Mr. Nicholas Carter. I have my orders regarding you, and I am going to carry them out."

"From the Baroness Latour, of course," said Nick Carter, dropping the name from his lips with mocking emphasis. "Do you mind telling me what your orders are about me?"

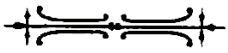
"I'm instructed to capture you if I catch you prowling around. So you'd better surrender and save trouble. We are a crowd, and there is only you two. You can't do anything."

"Oh, we can't do anything, eh? You are too many for us? Well, you have the odds, I'll admit. But I think I can play a card that will stop you from taking the pot right away."

"You can play any card you like, and it won't make any difference," was Kennedy's contemptuous rejoinder.

"We shall see," said Nick. "Now, I realize that it would be impossible for us to shoot down the whole seven of you, so we won't try to do it."

"You have that much sense, anyhow," rejoined Kennedy.



“Let me finish,” continued Carter. “Out of the seven of you, I have my eye on two men. You don’t know which two, but I do. Remember, two men, Kennedy!”

“Well, what of it?”

“Just this: As surely as one of you—any one of the whole seven—makes a move toward us, so surely I will shoot those two! And I generally get what I aim at. You know that, Kennedy. While I am shooting down two of your number, this man at my side will also shoot down two. By that time, unless we have gone under, the odds between us will be more nearly equal. You will be only three to two, and I am not afraid of those odds.”

CHAPTER IX.

ONE AGAINST SEVEN.

No sooner had Nick Carter announced his intention than he saw it impressed the men in front of him.

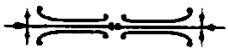
The dread of the sharpshooter is proverbial. When a man knows he may possibly be the next target for a man who shoots straight, and that the marksman will go after one man, and one only, it takes much of the fire of battle out of him, unless he is of phenomenal courage.

In this critical situation, the detective had hit upon a shrewd course.

It was much better than making a rush, blazing away indiscriminately. Now each of the seven men facing him wondered if he might be the one to be shot first.

That ugly-looking automatic pistol, with a number of cartridges ready to be sent flying at the enemy, was calculated to disturb the equanimity of any ordinary person.

There was a nervous shifting of feet among the sailors, and the detective's jaw set firmly as he saw that his bluff was



likely to be effective. It was hardly a bluff, either, for he and Mike Corrigan would both shoot on the instant if there were any move by the enemy. Moreover, each had picked out two men.

If Kennedy had not been unusually quick-witted, and if the sailors had not had a respect and love for the owner of the yacht, Mademoiselle Valeria—known in the Hotel Amsterdam as the Baroness Latour—which amounted to worship, it is likely that Nick Carter would have had things all his own way.

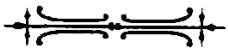
But Kennedy knew his men, and he was aware of the fact that a reminder of the young woman by whom they had been employed in many shady transactions in the past, and who had always paid them well, would make them forget pretty nearly everything else.

Quick action was imperative.

He saw that they were wavering, and that unless something was done quickly to bring them up, they might actually yield themselves to these two men who were holding them down with as much confidence as if they had been a dozen.

“Remember mademoiselle!”

Kennedy yelled this slogan with the suddenness of a rifle shot.



The effect was remarkable. On the instant, the whole seven leaped toward the detective and Mike Corrigan.

As they did so, the two automatic pistols barked once—twice—almost together.

The two men aimed at by Nick Carter both dropped.

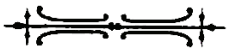
If Mike Corrigan's aim had been as good as the detective's, they might have won. But the porter's hand was shaky, and both of his bullets missed. He managed to shoot them at a rock some distance away, where they flattened and fell into the sand.

"Fire, men!" shouted Kennedy.

But Carter was not waiting for a bullet from the other side. For the third time he pulled his trigger. Then, taking his gun by the barrel, he used the heavy stock for a club and sprang at Kennedy, just as a shot came from the enemy and Mike Corrigan sank to the ground with a groan of agony.

The sailors might have fired again, only that they were afraid of attracting attention by the reports. Besides, seeing that Nick Carter had flung himself upon the first mate, they were for a moment uncertain what to do.

The detective and Kennedy came together with a crash. Outlaws as they were, the sailors of the piratical yacht out there in the bay were inclined to let the duel between the two giants go on till one or the other had gained a victory.



The seamen enjoyed a good fight, whether they were in it personally or not.

This was a good thing for the detective now. He was perfectly aware that, if he won, they might get a chance to close in and overpower him. But, even with that, he would make a dash for freedom, to come back with reënforcements later.

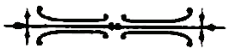
Letting his pistol fall to the sand, Nick went for his tall foe with his bare fists. Kennedy, being on the defensive, parried the detective's straight lunge, and got a knee lock on his adversary.

Nick, carried into close quarters as his opponent met his rush, started a long, slow, heartbreaking twist which was almost as grueling on himself as on Kennedy.

The latter was in good condition physically—hard as nails and full of aggressiveness. If he had been weaker than Nick Carter, the detective could not have made such progress with his mode of attack. Carter's supple form bent to every turn, and though Kennedy tried to crush him by main strength, his adversary could laugh at all his efforts.

Then Nick took a new line—or, rather, an amplification of his first method of attack.

Slowly he threw his powerful leg outward and twined it around that of the panting first mate.



Kennedy fought hard to keep out of this lock. But he could not help himself. The hold the detective had on him was almost breaking his back, and he knew that if he relaxed for the slightest fraction of a moment, the awful pressure of Nick Carter's steellike arms would crumple him up like a dried leaf in a hurricane.

The crucial moment came.

Kennedy was compelled to give way slightly, in the hope of relieving the pain in his breaking back. That was what Nick had been waiting for. Seizing the opening like lightning, his leg flew around to the position he had been seeking.

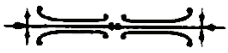
Now he knew he had his man under control.

Twisting with the suppleness and power of a boa constrictor, he ducked and heaved. As he did so, a gasp of involuntary admiration went up from the sailors.

There was no alternative for the first mate now but to yield or break in two.

The next instant he was sent flying over the detective's head in a neat and scientific cross-buttock, landing upside down on the sand, where, with a groan, he lay without motion and "all in."

Although Nick Carter was well breathed by his exertions, and gasped hard as he sought to recover himself, there was plenty of fight left in him.



The sailors came at him in a body.

With the fall of their leader, they seemed to emerge suddenly from the spell that had held them still. It seemed to Nick as if there were twenty flying fists in front of his face.

He recovered himself immediately, and, stirred to better efforts by the odds against him, he let drive scientifically and with deliberation, notwithstanding that he sent in his blows so swiftly.

One—two! One—two!

The detective's hard fists drove right and left into the faces of the men before him.

Usually they landed on the jaw, although now and then, for a change, the target was an eye or nose.

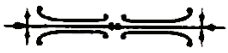
"Come on!" roared Nick Carter, warming up comfortably with all this excitement. "How many are there of you?"

One—two! One—two!

In the quiet of the night, with no other sounds to be heard, the blows thudded as if some one were kicking a dog.

One of the sailors went down, but the two left came on, fighting desperately.

The detective was ready for them.



A finished boxer, he was economical of his exertions. When he struck, he always landed, and when he parried, he moved only just so much as was required to ward off a blow.

There were no fancy twists or ballet master's gyrations about Nick Carter when using his fists in real battle.

A rain of heavy blows descended upon him. He retired just enough to get arm room, and came back steadily.

Had he had his assistants by his side, the detective could have held off these powerful seafaring men to the end.

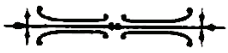
But all he had was Mike Corrigan, and poor Mike had been put out of commission by a bullet.

So it came that even the iron physique of the great detective weakened under the strain of the last half hour.

On the other hand, the sailors were fresh. Moreover, furious at the fall of their superior officer, the first mate, they determined to avenge him at all hazards.

The two men made a rush at Nick Carter side by side, and though he sent forth a hailstorm of blows, which seemed to fairly smother them, they contrived, by shameless "covering up," to keep on their feet, until, by sheer weight, they forced the detective to his knees.

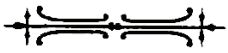
Still fighting, he was sent forward on his face.



He had been beaten, seven against one, almost into unconsciousness!

Almost—but not quite.

He lay still, on the ground, face downward, but keeping a sharp eye on what might be going on around him.



CHAPTER X.

QUIET PREPARATIONS.

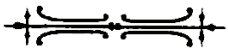
"He's a tougher man in a scrap than I thought he was," observed one of the yacht's crew—Groton, in fact—as he ruefully patted a very sore place on his cheek bone that promised to develop into a glorious black eye. "I always knew he could fight, but this is the first time I ever came against him. Holy mackerel! How he can hit!"

Kennedy was sitting up, spitting sand from his mouth and looking around in a dazed fashion. He groaned as he put a hand to his head. He had come down with a terrific bump when Nick Carter had whirled him to the ground at the end of their argument.

"What the blazes hit me?" exclaimed Kennedy.

He got stiffly to his feet and staggered toward where Nick Carter still lay on the beach, ere he went on, in a confused way:

"That's it, eh? Well, I'm willing to tackle anything human. But when it comes to stopping a whirlwind, I'll duck every time."



For a few moments he stood looking down at the detective, who did not make a move to indicate that he was conscious, although he was keeping close watch of everything from beneath his half-shut eyelids.

Kennedy was deeply impressed with the wonderful battle the detective had put up, and he looked over the splendidly built frame with the admiration that one strong man always vouchsafes to another—even though that other may be a foe.

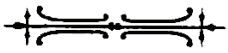
Neither Kennedy nor the two sailors still on their feet had any idea that there was somebody else gazing at Nick Carter from behind the bushes, with anxious eyes and rapidly heaving bosom.

Yet so it was. More remarkable still, it was a woman!

The Baroness Latour, as she was called in the Hotel Amsterdam—although better known to Nick Carter and to many others in different parts of the world as the lovely Mademoiselle Valeria, the adventuress who always had kept out of the grip of the law, despite many illegitimate transactions—had known what was going to take place when the boat left the hotel, carrying the unconscious Lord Vinton.

She had not been so sound asleep in her room as might have been thought.

What she was doing now was quite in accord with her usual methods.



She liked to be sure that her directions were properly carried out, and one of the secrets of her hold over her men was that they never knew when she would appear before them.

In the present case there was no necessity for her to make herself known, she thought. So she contented herself with looking in silence.

There was a particular reason for her coming now to see what would be done about getting Drago from the place where he had been left in the woods to the yacht. That reason was that she had learned of the intention of Nick Carter to find Drago, somehow, and she knew the detective well enough to hear that he would stumble on the boat that was to put in at the edge of the woods to get the prisoner.

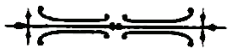
If Nick Carter happened to find out what was going on, she did not know what might be the end of it all.

Perhaps the strange power he exercised over her heart without desiring to do so may have had something to do with Mademoiselle Valeria's anxiety.

Be that as it may, she was there.

Not a word or movement escaped her. She was content to let her men carry out their work in their own way.

Now that Nick Carter had been overcome, and his man, the porter, lay on the ground with a bullet through his thigh, she had no doubt that all would go as she had planned.



“I wish we had that man with us,” observed Kennedy musingly, as he gazed down at Nick. “He’s a great fighter! Wouldn’t he have been in his element as skipper of a windjammer in the old days, when the captain was expected to straighten out every row that came up in the fo’c’s’le. However, there is no time to lose. Let’s see how these boys of ours are.”

Three out of the seven were in bad shape. Two had been shot through the arm by Nick—for he had been careful not to plant his bullets where they would be fatal—and the third had been knocked out by the detective’s fist on the point of the chin.

A strong dose of whisky from Kennedy’s flask administered to each, together with some vigorous rubbing of the forehead of the man who had been laid low by the knock-out punch, brought them all around, and the first mate turned to Mike Corrigan.

Hastily bandaging his wounded leg, Kennedy told him to stay where he was for a while, and then to crawl out into the open, where some of the people going to the golf links would be sure to see him.

The three men who had been hurt managed to stagger into the boat. But it was evident that they would not be any particular use.

The two who had remained uninjured, besides one who had been left in charge of the boat and prisoners, and had not

taken part in the fight, would have to row and steer, leaving Kennedy to take general charge.

"Now, boys," directed Kennedy, when everything else had been arranged, "pick up this man who has given us all the trouble. We'll take him along."

Mademoiselle Valeria—to call her by her real name—smiled approvingly as two of the sailors stooped and picked up the seemingly helpless detective and lifted him into the boat.

"Shall we bend a rope around him?" asked Groton.

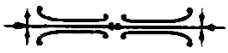
"Not necessary!" said Kennedy. "He can't do any harm now. Let's hurry back to the *Idaline*."

The detective made no sign. He suffered his eyes to close a little more, and when he was lifted and placed in the bottom of the boat, he allowed himself to drop limply just as he was put.

Valeria saw the boat shoved off from the bank toward the middle of the bay, and then swing around in the direction of the yacht.

"I wonder what Colonel Pearson will say to me when I go aboard the *Idaline* to-morrow," she murmured, as she made her way back to the hotel.

She was still thinking this when she went to bed, and this time dropped into a sleep that lasted till morning.



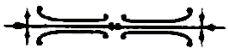
Meanwhile, the two unwounded sailors took the oars and rowed hard toward the yacht, while the two other men, who were not shot—including the one who had been knocked out by Nick Carter, but who had now practically recovered—were ready to relieve their shipmates when they should grow tired.

Kennedy sat in the stern, steering, and apparently in a reverie. He was thinking what a good stroke of work he had accomplished that night.

Not only had he got the two prisoners made by the beautiful mistress of the yacht, and was taking them to the vessel, where they could be held in safety until the demanded ransom was paid, but he had actually got into his power the one man feared by Valeria and her crew of desperadoes who had made the *Idaline* the most annoying craft known to the police of a dozen countries.

If the yacht had not been so carefully changed in its appearance, by altering her rigging, shortening her smokestack by an ingenious telescoping device that was the invention of its fair owner, and giving a different look to her in several other ways, Nick Carter would have recognized her at once.

As it was, he had thought he knew it, although he could not reconcile the salient points of difference between the *Idaline*, as he remembered her, and this graceful pleasure steamer riding so calmly at anchor in the bay.



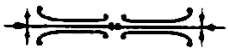
Now that he had found out who the Baroness Latour really was, and had actually been in conversation with her—following this up by running against Kennedy, whom he also had met before—he did not need to hear the first mate mention the name of the *Idaline* to be sure of her identity.

It was all clear to Nick now. He was to be taken aboard the yacht, with Harvey L. Drago and Lord Vinton, and they would put out to sea until the friends of the prisoners had consented to pay the enormous sums which would be demanded through carefully veiled newspaper advertisements.

As to what would be done with him, he could not quite satisfy himself. He knew that Mademoiselle Valeria had shown him, in various subtle ways, that she would have been his friend if he had let her, and he did not think she would go to the extreme of killing him.

"I wouldn't trust her," he thought. "She could easily give orders to some of those rascals on the yacht to shoot me in my sleep, to poison me, or even to suffocate me with some of that charming gas she used on Lord Vinton—and, doubtless, on Mrs. van Dietrich, too. But—I don't mean to let them do it. That is where I have something to say."

The two men at the oars were laboring hard, for it was not easy to move such a heavy boatload by two pairs of arms, and Kennedy was sorry the boat had not been rigged so that four men could row, one to each oar.



Nick could not see how near they were to the yacht, but he figured that they would reach it in not many minutes.

“Hello! How are you by this time?” whispered a voice in his ear. “Coming around?”

“It was Harvey L. Drago speaking, and Nick turned his head enough to find that Drago was lying almost by his side, his feet extended opposite to those of the detective.

“Keep quiet,” was Carter’s response, in the lowest of murmurs. “You’ve got your gag out, I see.”

“Of course I have,” was the reply. “Those clumsy bunglers couldn’t tie it on so that it would stay. They may know how to knot a rope, but a handkerchief is out of their line. Got a knife?”

“Yes. Keep quiet,” returned the detective.

Nick Carter was pleased with Harvey L. Drago. He liked a man who was not easily discouraged, and it was evident that Drago was as full of fight as if he had never been beaten.

Nick drew his jackknife from his pocket, and severed Drago’s bonds with a series of quick slashes.

In the darkness his movements were not noticed by the sailors.

The prisoners were in the fore part of the boat, for one thing, so that the rowers’ backs were toward them.

Kennedy and the other men were in the stern, and it would not have been easy for them to discern the doings of the prisoners, even in daylight. Now, with the moon gone, and only stars to light up the wide bay and boat, there was hardly any possibility.

“Say! I heard those fellows speak of you as Nick Carter,” whispered Drago. “Is that right? Are you the famous——”

“My name is Nick Carter,” interrupted the detective. “I am the detective. Are you game for a fight to get out of this?”

“Am I?” returned Drago, so emphatically that Nick warned him not to speak above a low whisper. “You’ll see.”

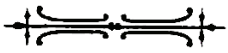
“All right! But be careful. If it were not for the splashing of the water and the little noise the oars make, you would have been overheard already. I’ll give you the signal for action.”

“What are we going to do?”

“Wait till the boat gets up to the yacht. Then, before they can make fast, knock as many of them overboard as you can and jump for the ladder. Get that?”

“Sure! I wish there was another one to help.”

“There is,” put in a low voice, behind the detective. “I’m not clear in my mind. But I believe I could do something in a pinch.”



Lord Vinton, slowly recovering from the effects of Valeria's poisonous gas, and helped back to reason and strength by the invigorating sea air, had heard what Nick Carter and Drago had been saying, and was anxious to take a hand.

The detective welcomed him with quiet enthusiasm.

"If you can lay out only one of the men with a boat stretcher," he whispered, "you'll be doing a great deal. Here is the stretcher right here!"

The detective had found a loose piece of wood, some three feet long, lying near him, and he had known it for one of the braces against which oarsmen place their feet to help their pull on the oars.

It would make a most effective weapon, even in the rather weak grasp of the half-poisoned Lord Vinton.

"Think you can fix one of them with this?" asked Carter.

"I'll give him a rap that he'll remember," promised Vinton.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER HATCHES.

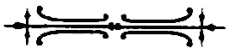
Nick Carter was glad that it took more than a quarter of an hour longer to reach the yacht. Every minute was beneficial to Lord Vinton, as he drew in deep breaths of the life-giving atmosphere.

"Easy all!" called out Kennedy, directing his oarsmen. "Back water! Unship port oars! That's good! Steady! Wait till I get hold of the ladder rail!"

But the first mate was never allowed to get to the ladder rail of the yacht. Instead, he found himself suddenly confronted by Nick Carter, whom he had supposed still insensible.

He hardly had time to consider how the detective had managed to get back to his wits so quickly, for Nick's right arm shot out, in a feint for the eye. Kennedy attempted to parry, and Carter immediately crossed with his left. Sending in a sledge-hammer crash to the mate's chin, the detective dropped his man overboard from the stern with a splash.

Nick did not stop to see what became of the mate. There were other things to do.



The two sailors who had been rowing, each seized an oar for a club and tried to knock down Drago.

He was too quick for them, however. Tearing the oar out of the hands of one of them, a sweeping blow mowed the sailor into the sea, to join Kennedy.

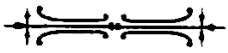
Lord Vinton, although still suffering slightly from the effects of the gas in his bedroom, was able to keep in his mind the one thing he had been instructed to do by the detective, which was to use the boat stretcher.

So he brought it down on the head of Groton with a force that knocked him senseless. Then he administered a side wipe to the man who had remained in the boat when the others were ashore, and put him out of the fight, although it did not render him unconscious.

“Grab those oars out of the boat, and shove her off!” shouted Nick, as he got on the square wooden grating at the foot of the ladder, and saw that Lord Vinton was already by his side. “Throw them into the sea or bring them along, Drago!”

Harvey L. Drago was a man after Nick Carter’s own heart, for he seemed to fit into a scrap as if it were his regular occupation. In a jiffy, he had the four oars in his arms and piled them up on the ladder, just as he gave the boat a tremendous shove with one foot.

Away went the boat, with the two wounded sailors and the other three who were more or less disabled. The fifth sailor,



together with Kennedy, the mate, had disappeared in the dark waters of the bay.

Nick was obliged to make a quick grab for Drago, or that energetic young man would have gone into the sea, too, as he kicked the boat away.

He recovered his balance with the help of the detective, however, and rushed up the ladder at Nick's heels.

It was fortunate for the three victors that only a small watch was on deck. The taking away of six men from the crew, with the first mate, had weakened the yacht so far as men were concerned.

There were two men on deck, and neither of them was wide awake. They had been sitting talking in the shadows of the smokestack until one of them had fallen fast asleep, while the other nodded.

Until the fight actually began on the boat at the foot of the sea ladder, there had been hardly a sound.

The men were rowing with muffled oars, and there had been no talking except the whispered exchanges between the three prisoners.

When the battle did begin, it was over before the two men on deck realized what was happening.

Nick and Drago, coming up the ladder, met them both at the gangway, and the swiftness and dexterity with which these

two seamen found themselves bound and gagged remained a matter of wonder with them for the remainder of their lives.

"Now, gentlemen!" whispered Nick. "The fo'c's'le! There must be half a dozen men in there. Close the hatch for the present, so that they can't get out. We'll deal with them later."

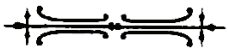
They fastened up the cubby-hole forward where the men slept, and had trapped seven men before they awoke. In fact, it was an hour afterward before any of them realized that they were prisoners.

When they did, they found the door so well secured that they feared they could only wait until somebody should come to let them out.

All this had been carried out so quietly that the officer of the deck—who was the second mate, Morgan—did not know till he emerged from the chart room that the *Idaline* was in possession of an invading party.

Just as he poked his nose out of the chart room—where he had been enjoying a nap on a softly cushioned locker—he was seized by two strong pairs of hands, his mouth stopped with a handful of oakum, and a rope thrown around his arms with the scientific precision that proclaimed it the work of an experienced sailor.

It was Nick Carter who had knotted the rope, while Lord Vinton, acting under orders, had shoved the oakum into the astonished mate's mouth.



Drago held him by the arms while the detective bound them.

Nick was a yachtsman himself. There was not a rope or a bit of canvas that he did not know on a full-rigged windjammer.

Having deposited Morgan again on the locker—but not so comfortably as before—and lashed his hands behind him, Nick directed Drago to tie him to the leg of the solid table which was screwed to the floor.

"There he is," he remarked, when Drago had finished the task. "You've done that well. He may perhaps get himself loose in the course of an hour or so, although I don't think he will. But by that time we shall have things arranged so that we shall not care. Come down to the cabin. There is a man there I want to see."

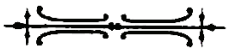
They went below, the three of them, and when Captain Latell had been caught in his stateroom and made a prisoner before he realized what was going on, Nick went to another cabin.

Here, pistol in hand, he used the barrel to poke a burly man, who lay on his back in the wide berth, snoring in perfect contentment.

The well-built man started up to a sitting posture. The detective promptly knocked him down again.

"Lie where you are, Mr. Spanner!" commanded Nick.

"What does this mean?" spluttered the indignant occupant of the berth. "Who are you, sir?"



“Nick Carter!” replied the detective coolly.

“What?”

This monosyllabic inquiry came with a shriek of amazement, tinged with indignation and fury.

“Keep quiet, Mr. Spanner!” admonished Nick. “We have possession of the yacht, and——”

“Where is Captain Latell?” thundered Spanner.

“A prisoner in his stateroom. And we have the second mate, Morgan, tied and gagged, in the chart room.”

“And Kennedy?”

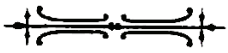
“Drowned.”

“What?”

“He tried to make a prisoner of me and two guests at the Hotel Amsterdam, and he fell overboard, into the sea. He was not seen again. I want you to tell me where Mrs. van Dietrich is on this yacht.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” protested Spanner.

“That’s unfortunate. Because, if you don’t produce the lady within ten minutes, we shall take you ashore and have you put in jail for kidnaping.”



“Let me get up and dress,” growled Spanner. “You have no right to come aboard my yacht at all, and I want to see what you are doing here.”

“Oh, it is your yacht, is it?” asked Nick, with a curious smile. “I supposed you were the uncle of the owner, and that her name is Mademoiselle Valeria. She has been staying at the Hotel Amsterdam for some days under the name of the Baroness Latour.”

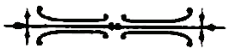
“I don’t know a Baroness Latour—or a Mademoiselle Valeria, either,” snorted Spanner.

“Don’t you? Well, we’ll look for Mrs. van Dietrich ourselves. When we have found her, we shall know something about the ownership of the yacht, I think.”

“Look here, Mr. Carter,” suddenly broke in Lord Vinton, who had been standing in the corridor, “Mr. Drago has come to tell me that there is something or other clicking away in the captain’s room, and he’s afraid it is an infernal machine.”

“I don’t think there is anything infernal about it,” laughed the detective. “Take this pistol and hold it to the head of this chunky gentleman in pajamas on the bed till I come back. If he becomes too restless—that is, to the point of being threatening—pull the trigger.”

“What are you going to do?”



“I’m going to take a look at the infernal machine in the captain’s room.”

“Very well. The door is locked outside, and the captain is gagged and bound on his berth,” remarked Lord Vinton coolly.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INFERNAL MACHINE.

It was just what Nick Carter expected when he entered the stateroom of Captain Latell—the "infernal machine" was fixed in the window, with the sash helping to hold it firm.

"The wireless telephone," he muttered. "I wonder who is talking."

It was clicking in a subdued way, and the detective, after a careless glance at the captain on the bed, put the receiver on his ears, and settled down to listen.

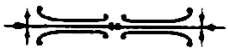
"Hello!" was the first utterance of the machine that Nick caught. "Is that the yacht?"

"Yes," replied Nick. "Who is that?"

"Is Colonel Pearson aboard?"

"This is Colonel Pearson talking."

"Is it? That you, chief?"



“What?” cried Nick delightedly. “Is that you, Chick?”

“Yes.”

“Good! Where are you?”

“In your room at the hotel. This wireless telephone of yours came, and I am using it. Good thing you showed me how it works. Say, chief, are you all right?”

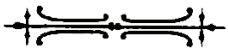
“Yes. Lord Vinton and Mr. Drago are with me. We’ve got the yacht.”

“That’s what I thought. I’ve been staring through a pair of strong night glasses, and from what I could see, it looked to me as if you had won. I saw some people tumble out of a boat, and I was bothered about it till a skiff that the hotel people had sent out came in just now with two half-drowned men. They are the first mate of the yacht and one of the crew, I’m told.”

“Well?”

“The sailor talked when he was questioned, and said you’d taken the yacht. He said some pirates had it, and he was going to see what could be done about it. The other man—the first mate—may not come around at all. So he couldn’t say anything.”

“Come aboard as soon as you can, Chick. We’ve got two of the people who were kidnaped, as I told you. But we can’t find Mrs. van Dietrich.”



“She’s on board, the sailor says. There’s a secret stateroom amidships. You get to it by way of the corridor past Mr. Jared Spanner’s room.”

“Very well! We’ll look for her there. But, see here, Chick! You come aboard as quickly as you can, and bring half a dozen men with you. Ask Mr. Savage and Mr. Mallory, the hotel managers, to pick you out reliable fellows, who have nerve. I want to bring this yacht in, but I must have men to work her, as well as to keep our prisoners safe. You see——”

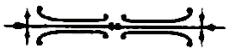
That was as far as the detective got with his conversation. A tremendous uproar broke out at the head of the companionway, and the next moment seven husky sailors came rushing down and hurled themselves upon him.

One big fellow pointed a revolver at his head and ordered him to surrender.

The sailor made a strategical mistake here. He threatened the detective with the pistol before making sure that his man would stand where he was to be fired at.

Nick Carter ducked almost before the demand for his surrender was out of the other man’s mouth.

When he came up again—which he did like lightning—the top of his head struck the sailor’s chin and knocked him backward, stunned and gasping.



At the same instant the detective wrenched the revolver from his hand and faced another man who was standing in the doorway.

This second man had no gun. His weapon was an iron belaying pin, and if he could have swung it, he might have done serious damage.

As it was, he retreated in disorder as he saw the steady eye of Carter running along the blue steel barrel of the big forty-four, and, as a natural consequence, he upset all those behind him.

“Vinton! Drago!” shouted Nick.

There was a quick response to his call. The two came running along the corridor, and Vinton fired off his automatic pistol on general principles.

He did not hit anybody, but the report was tremendous in those confined quarters. It scared every sailor among them.

Nick Carter could not help laughing heartily as he and his companions herded the men along the deck and into the forecastle again.

Taking care the door was thoroughly secured this time, Nick stationed Lord Vinton, with the pistol, outside, giving him orders to shoot down the first man who should appear.

This injunction was given loudly enough to reach the ears of the men inside, and Nick was satisfied there would be no

attempt to break out again—at least, not unless the yacht was recaptured by its original owners.

It was just as this arrangement was effected that a tubbylike figure, in red-and-blue pajamas, came pattering along the deck, holding a revolver in its hand.

"Hands up!" yelled Nick Carter, presenting his jackknife at the face of the pajama man, who, of course, was Jared Spanner.

Mr. Spanner had never been remarkable for physical courage, and he let his revolver fall with a crash on the deck. He could not see what the jackknife was in the gloom, but he took it for granted that it was a heavy firearm of some kind.

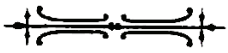
"Back to bed!" commanded Nick sternly.

"I heard a noise outside and I left him alone for a minute," explained Lord Vinton penitently.

Spanner padded back in his bare feet. When he was in the stateroom once more, the detective took the precaution of tying his hands behind him and fastening him in his berth with a rope that was twisted around the iron framework below.

There was one more important thing to do, and that was to find Mrs. van Dietrich.

With the information he had as to the whereabouts of her cabin, it was not difficult for Nick Carter to discover it. Then



he solved the problem of entering, and, after a knock, for propriety's sake, he went in.

Mrs. van Dietrich was of a philosophical turn of mind. That was proved by the fact that she was in a comfortable bed, with her clothes still on, but with a blanket pulled up under her arms, and sleeping as calmly as if she had been in her own room at the hotel.

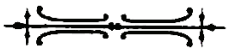
Nick Carter assured himself that she was really in a natural sleep, and then quietly withdrew, to wait till Chick and reënforcements should arrive.

It was an hour later, and the sun was just showing itself over the rim of the eastern horizon, when Chick, with eight men—guests, porters, and the two proprietors of the hotel—rowed up to the sea ladder of the *Idaline*.

It was embarrassing to Nick Carter to receive so many and such profuse thanks for recovering the three guests who had disappeared from the hotel, and he begged both Mallory and Savage to let it pass.

Nick Carter arranged to leave a guard on the yacht, when Mrs. van Dietrich was to be escorted to shore by the detective, Lord Vinton, and Harvey L. Drago, with Chick, in state.

It was only after considerable delay that this was done, however, for Mrs. van Dietrich was a leader of fashion, and she could not appear in public until her own maid, Mary



Cook, had been brought from the hotel, with a complete change of raiment and various toilet necessaries.

All this took so much time, that it was well into the forenoon when the dear lady at last appeared in the lobby of the Hotel Amsterdam, to receive the congratulations by all the other guests on her wonderful rescue by "this dear Colonel Pearson."

The stolen jewelry had all been recovered.

At last Nick Carter got away from the lobby and into the elevator, telling the man to take him to the fourth floor. Once there, he hurried to the rooms occupied by the Baroness Latour.

He was surprised to see all the doors of the suite wide open, and one of the hotel housemaids busy with broom, dust pan, and other paraphernalia of her business.

"Where is the baroness?" demanded Carter hastily.

"She went early this morning, sir," was the reply.

"Where has she gone?"

"I don't know. Perhaps they can tell you at the office," answered the girl.

But they could not tell him at the office. All they knew was that the baroness had paid her bill and gone away, with her

maid and her trunks, to the railroad station, and that she had taken the nine-thirty-seven west.

“H’m!” muttered Nick Carter. “So she has got away from me. Well, it would have been difficult to convict her, even if I had wanted to do it. Her man Kennedy is dead, and I have Jared Spanner a prisoner on what he says is his own yacht. After all, I have cleared up the mystery of the kidnaping of important guests for ransom, and even if I can’t clap Spanner in jail—a point I haven’t settled in my own mind—I think I have pulled his claws.”

He walked up and down the lobby several times in deep thought.

“After all,” he broke out, at last, half aloud, “I don’t know that my dear baroness has got away from me altogether yet. I still have her yacht, and she is sure to want to come on board sooner or later. I believe I’ll go up to my room and get a few hours’ sleep.”

THE END.

Lyons Head Publishing